Literature

Atlas Shrugged

by Ayn Rand

A Lively Learning Guide
by Shmoop

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In a Nutshell/Overview

Published in 1957, *Atlas Shrugged* was Ayn Rand's last and most ambitious novel. Rand set out to explain her personal philosophy in this book, which follows a group of pioneering industrialists who go on strike against a corrupt government and a judgmental society. After completing this novel Rand turned to nonfiction and published works on her philosophy for the rest of her career. Rand actually only published four novels in her entire career, and the novel that came out before *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead*, was published in 1943. So there was a pretty long publishing gap there.

It might seem a bit odd to use a work of fiction to make a philosophical statement, but this actually reflects Rand's view of art. Art, for her, was a way to present ideals and ideas. In other words, Rand herself admitted that her characters may not always be "believable." They are "ideal" people who represent a range of philosophies. Rand used these characters to show how her philosophy could be lived, rather than just publishing an essay about it.

Rand's personal philosophy, known as Objectivism (to read more about it, check out our Themes section) was, and remains, really controversial. Objectivism criticizes a lot of philosophies and views, ranging from Christianity to communism, and as a result it can be very polarizing. Rand herself was a devout atheist, held very open views about sex (which definitely raised some eyebrows in 1950s America), and was a staunch anti-communist.

Rand's anti-communism stems from her personal history. She was born in Russia in 1905 and lived through the Bolshevik Revolution, which is when communists overthrew Russia's monarchy and took over, establishing the Soviet Union. The Revolution was a bloody affair, and the new communist government was very oppressive; as a result Rand developed a lifelong hatred of communism and violence of any sort.

Rand fled the Soviet Union in 1926 and came to America, where she quickly became a fan of American freedom, American democracy, and American capitalism, all of which greatly contrasted to the experiences she'd had in the oppressive Soviet Union. Rand's personal philosophy developed around these American ideas, in opposition to the type of life she saw in the Soviet Union.

Given that *Atlas Shrugged* is a statement of Rand's personal philosophy, the book expresses many of her views on religion, sex, politics, etc. When it was published, it received a lot of negative reviews. Many conservatives hated the book for its atheist views and its upfront treatment of sex. Many liberals hated the book for its celebration of capitalism. The book also confused a lot of people. But the novel sold, and it has remained popular since; it's actually never been out of print since it was first published over fifty years ago. *Atlas Shrugged* was kind of like one of those blockbuster movies that gets horrible reviews but still does really well at the box office. Something about this book intrigues people, whether it's the characters, the ideas, or just the mystery plot itself.

In fact, *Atlas Shrugged* has even seen a renewed surge in popularity lately, coinciding with the recent financial crisis. (If you want to see some of the news coverage of this, check out our "Best of the Web" section.) The book does deal with industrialists and hard financial times, so this popularity boom is not too surprising. In recent years the news media has often classed the novel as über-conservative, which is funny, since a lot of conservatives hated the book when it first came out. At any rate it's still a very controversial book - just check out the hundreds of varied reviews it has racked up on Amazon.

Why Should I Care?

In an old episode of *South Park*, a character who reads *Atlas Shrugged* declares that the book ruined reading for him and that he would never read another book again. (If you want to watch this hilarious clip, head on over to the "Best of the Web" section.) There's a reason this book is so often made the butt of jokes. It's long. Crazy long. We're talking Tolstoy levels of longness. It's also a book that's about politics, philosophy, 30-something business people, and more philosophy. Frankly, this book can seem downright off-putting. Even the title is confusing.

So why should you care? Well, for one thing, putting aside all the Deep Thoughts and Profound Ideas in this book, we have a bunch of characters who are challenging the establishment. Seriously. At its core, this book is about individuals who go against the crowd, individuals bold enough to speak their minds, do their own thing, and seek their own happiness. And in trying to do so, these bold individuals face a heck of a lot of peer pressure. In fact, pretty much everyone in the whole world disapproves of these people, who are trying to make better lives for themselves by embracing things like liberty and self-esteem.

It's like high school times a billion. The world is filled with the snobby popular crowd and our intrepid band of misfit heroes is outnumbered, but never outsmarted. Turns out all that philosophy we mentioned earlier has a lot to do with all of this individualism and going against the crowd, too. Whether it's a high school cafeteria or a high-powered business meeting, some things seem to stay pretty universal. This book shows that there are always people who want to march to the beat of their own drum and who are bold enough to risk mass disapproval in order to do it. Kind of cool and inspiring really, regardless of your opinion of their particular philosophy.

What's Up With the Title?

Upon hearing this title, your first reaction may be, "huh?" Who is Atlas? Why is he shrugging? Well, first off, Atlas refers to a Greek myth. In Greek mythology, Atlas was a Titan. The Titans had a big war with the Olympians - Zeus and that crowd - and lost. As punishment, Zeus made Atlas forever hold up the heavens on his shoulders. In many pieces of art, Atlas is shown holding up the globe. (Check out these images for some examples.) Which brings new, literal (and painful) meaning to the phrase "the weight of the world on your shoulders."

In this book, Atlas serves as a metaphor for all the smart, creative "doers" in the world: the industrialists, the artists, the engineers, the professors, etc. Just like Atlas, these are the people responsible for supporting the entire world. In Rand's opinion, they are all mistreated and are opposed by bad government policies. So they all go on strike and basically "shrug" off the weight of the world. The shrug part is important here. This strike of heroic individuals is a nonviolent one. That's why the book isn't called "Atlas Threw Off the World."

It's also worth noting that shrug is in the past tense in the title. The novel itself is narrated in the past tense and the action covers a span of many years. This all contributes to the legend-like quality of the book's plot, and the reference to Atlas, a mythological figure, also contributes to the novel's epic scope.

What's Up With the Ending?

The ending of the book is kind of a downer and a half, which feels like a bit of a rip-off considering that we've stuck around for thousands of pages. We do get a positive, heroes-saving-the-day moment when our crowd of Super Friends rescue Galt from the Villains' Evil Lair, so to speak. But as they are getting the heck out of Dodge, Dodge pretty much collapses. New York plunges into a blackout, and the country's transportation system goes to hell in a handbasket. The very end of the book tracks our heroes safely back to Galt's Gulch, the valley that Dagny calls Atlantis. But this is kind of undercut by the wrenching scene that immediately precedes it: that of our favorite Super Sidekick Eddie Willers, collapsed on the ground and stranded alone with no way to get home.

In a way, the book really needed to end on this note of muted optimism. After all, the narrative basically tracks the total collapse of society from beginning to end. The apocalyptic downfall that did occur couldn't be written off with a falsely cheerful ending. Even though most of our heroes are safe, they have a long, hard road ahead of them. Rebuilding society isn't exactly something to throw a parade about.

It's also worth noting that the final scenes with Eddie pack more of an emotional punch than the quick rundown of characters we get at the very end. Again, this helps highlight the costs and consequences of Galt's strike and the government's lousy job. Galt and his strikers may have escaped, but, like the stranded Eddie, they have a very long journey ahead of them, even though, for the purposes of the narrative, their stories have come to a close.

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Writing Style

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That probably seems like a random list, but all these styles are in fact interconnected. Just stick with us for a bit. This is a big book in more ways than one (not just in that it makes a great doorstop). It deals with big ideas and has a global scope, but that scope is also offset by lots of very intimate scenes and a focus on individual characters. So we have a play of different styles here, with a lot of alterations in style among chapters and even within chapters.

Mysterious

First up, have mysterious. Given that this book is largely a mystery (who is John Galt?) that's rather fitting, if a bit unoriginal. As with any good mystery, we have a lot of clues sprinkled throughout the book. These take the form of recurring themes, images, and phrases, recalled past scenes, and even chapter titles that reference scenes.

Take the title of the book's last chapter, "In the Name of the Best Within Us." This recalls the very first scene of the novel, where Eddie Willers remembers a childhood conversation with Dagny where he wonders what the "best within us" is. In the last chapter, Eddie remembers that childhood scene. Details like this are used as clues. Here we get a clue in the chapter title itself as to what the chapter may be about and which character might play a large role.

Even though we get lots of clues, we rarely get much explanation of them - hence the mystery. One of the best examples of the book's mysterious style is Eddie's one-sided conversations with a mystery friend, who turns out to be John Galt. We only ever hear Eddie's side of the conversations, which tend to give us a lot of detail about events happening in the

book. For example:

"Nothing's going to stop us this time....Sure, I know who's going to lay the rail. McNamara, of Cleveland....We can count on him. There aren't many good contractors left....We're rushed as hell, but I like it. I've been coming to the office an hour earlier than usual, but she beats me to it. She's always there first....What?...I don't know what she does at night....Nothing much, I guess...She plays records....What do you care, which records?" (1.3.3.7)

The mystery friend is represented solely by ellipses here. We see the effects of conversations like these (for instance, McNamara disappears shortly after) without fully understanding the cause for a long time. This sort of mysterious link between cause and effect is common stylistically in this book. Characters frequently are puzzled by the behavior of others or feel they are nearing the edge of a big realization then abruptly pull back from it, leaving us hanging.

There was no reason that he had to remember the oak tree tonight. It meant nothing to him any longer, only a faint tinge of sadness - and somewhere within him, a drop of pain moving briefly and vanishing, like a raindrop on the glass of a window, its course in the shape of a question mark. (1.1.1.25)

We are frequently left without any "reason" for the way a character feels or behaves, or for events that occur. The style in this passage also uses a lot of significant imagery. In fact, the imagery in the book frequently gives us clues that the sparse language does not. Stylistically, the book is relatively short on detailed descriptions. We tend to get more metaphoric imagery than lengthy details about what a character is feeling, for instance. The style leaves a lot implied, which adds to the book's overall mysteriousness.

Blunt and Visual

The book's diction, or word choice, is generally both blunt and vague. This needs some explaining. On a sentence level, the

narrative style uses few words to hint at a lot of things. As we've seen, the style is quite mysterious and rarely comes right out and says what things mean. Instead, the style bluntly tells us the facts of situations and uses things like powerful imagery to hint at the deeper meanings and themes of scenes. A good example of this complex style is the Taggart Tunnel disaster narration:

The lights of Winston kept growing smaller, each time they appeared; the black hole of the tunnel kept growing larger. A black veil went streaking past the windows at times, dimming the lights; it was the heavy smoke from the coal-burning engine....As the train went into the tunnel, the flame of Wyatt's Torch was the last thing they saw on earth. (2.7.3.271, 290)

The narrative doesn't come right out and say that the train is doomed, but the imagery pretty much screams it. We get lots of darkness and light symbolism here and thematic meanings; but the style itself is very to-the-point and doesn't use lots of long sentences or excess words.

Sweeping

But while the style uses lots of short sentences, it is still very sweeping in places. This book has a wide focus and deals with Big Issues, so it makes sense that the style sometimes reflects this. We get big, dramatic scenes even while, stylistically, the language used in the scenes isn't overly complicated. Let's check out an example:

Aloud she said, "I want you to know this. I started my life with a single absolute: that the world was mine to shape in the image of my highest values and never to be given up to a lesser standard, no matter how long or hard the struggle" - you whose presence I had always felt in the streets of the city, the wordless voice within her was saying, and whose world I wanted to build. (3.2.6.67)

Dagny is making a big speech here and is discussing big ideas; but the sentences and phrases she uses are pretty basic and pointed. She doesn't ramble on dramatically. What's also

significant is that the style uses interspliced scenes here. We hear what Dagny is saying aloud as well as her internal thoughts, which recalls a scene from many chapters earlier where she has an inner monologue.

In many ways the style of the book resembles that of a movie script. It makes use of important visuals; we often recall past scenes in flashbacks and have repeated dialogue; and we have lots of dramatic sequences, like the tunnel collapse and Dagny's plane crash. In the above passage, you can almost imagine it as a movie, cutting back and forth between past and present while dramatic music swells. Ayn Rand actually worked in Hollywood as a script reader and later a scriptwriter, and we can see that experience stylistically reflected in *Atlas Shrugged*.

Episodic

This brings us to our last major style category: episodic. Episodic is a way of saying that the style uses a lot of self-contained episodes or scenes that have a beginning, middle, and end. Episodic refers to the broader style of the book, looking at entire chapters and scenes. The other styles we've discussed were more focused on sentences and paragraphs. So style can cover a lot of different things.

In episodic style, scenes are all separate from one another, yet are still connected into a larger whole - like a movie, really. You'll have a scene with two characters having coffee, then you'll cut to another scene involving a different character in a store or something. You can also have scenes that cut and then jump forward in time. Here's an example in *Atlas Shrugged*:

"I couldn't help it, Jim!" it [the voice on the telephone] gulped. "I couldn't help it!...The government of the People's State of Mexico has nationalized the San Sebastián Mines and the San Sebastián Railroad."

"[. . .] and, therefore, I can assure the gentlemen of the Board that there is no occasion for panic."

[. . .] James Taggart stood at the long table, addressing the Board of Directors. His voice was precise and monotonous; it connoted safety. (1.4.2.41; 1.4.3.1-2)

There's a ton going on here. We have a scene that starts *in medias res*, a fancy Latin term for "in the middle of things." We hear about the disaster and then get a scene break where we enter into the middle of James's speech. The new scene itself begins with an ellipses, and we don't learn that it's James who is speaking until later in the paragraph. So we have two separate, but highly interconnected, episodes here.

Also, the style reflects a lot of the other things we've discussed. The sentences are short and factual, especially the narrator's description of James. We also get words that imply a lot even if they don't come right out and say it. The voice on the phone is described as "it" rather than "he," which says a lot about the kind of person speaking. This isn't so much a person as a panicky voice.

Within each chapter we usually have a whole series of scenes involving different characters and different times and places. The cuts between these scenes is generally very abrupt. And within each scene we may have flashbacks to previous events and clues that recall past scenes and phrases. All these scenes add up to a whole chapter, which often has a thematic focus. The chapters go together to make up a volume with a thematic focus. And the volumes go together to make up the book. It's like those Russian nesting dolls, where the smaller ones stack inside increasingly bigger ones.

Tone

Matter-of-fact, Detached, Inquisitive, Hopeful

For the most part, the tone of *Atlas Shrugged* is straightforward and somewhat unemotional. It is often weirdly detached in places, which helps contribute to the book's vaguely mysterious, ominous atmosphere. We "hear" most of the novel through characters (Hank and Dagny especially) who coolly repress their emotions and approach situations with an almost clinical detachment. That isn't to say that deep emotion isn't lurking beneath the surface, but the book doesn't whack you in the face with angst and woe.

The book often employs the inquisitive tone of a newspaper article: it's curious and probing, like an investigative reporter. In the run-down of various disasters, the narrator often channels an inner journalist. The Taggart Tunnel collapse is a good example of this: the tone is detached and factual, wondering impersonally how something like that could happen and then shrugging when the disaster does happen. The tone of the book highlights deep emotions by not highlighting them. Instead of being melodramatic, the tone simply *implies* a lot of the emotions behind the scenes, leaving readers to fill in the emotional blanks.

But this isn't to say that the tone is always without emotion. It can be cautiously hopeful, even though that hope is often slightly diminished by a dose of harsh reality. Main characters are presented very affectionately, and the novel's philosophical ideals are treated optimistically. Even in the face of disaster, the narrative tone often hints at some hope for the future.

Narrator Point of View

Third Person (Omniscient)

The narrator here is wholly omniscient, meaning that the narrator can let us in on any character's inner thoughts or back story at will. But we rarely hear just the narrator's voice, independent of any character. The majority of the narrative is filtered through the point of view of various characters, and this point of view rotates continually.

For the most part we stick with the filtering views of a number of major characters, and the character focus shifts during the various scenes that make up larger chapters. These focus shifts alter the narrative filter accordingly, meaning that in Hank's scenes we hear his thoughts, in Dagny's scenes we hear her thoughts, and in their scenes together we ping-pong between their thoughts.

The rare occasions where the narrator butts in are notable. The narrator takes us through the crash of the Taggart Tunnel without filtering through a major character, which helps to emphasize the huge impact and scope of the disaster. We get coverage of a large number of people and events instead of any one person's detailed inner thoughts.

Another notable example where the narrator takes over is during the scene leading up Cherryl's suicide. The narrator actually comes out and says that he/she is translating Cherryl's final thoughts to us, since Cherryl was too stressed to be articulate. In this case, the narrator helps highlight the tragedy of Cherryl's death.

Overall, though, the narrator mostly stays out of the way and simply presents a revolving door of character perspectives to us.

Symbols, Imagery, Allegory

Music and Sound

Music and sound are running themes throughout the novel. It's no mistake that music is tied to the strike and to Galt's value system. Meanwhile, sound, unappealing, dangerous, and even deadly, is linked to the looters. As with many things in the novel, different aspects of a broad category - in this case types of sound - are used to symbolically differentiate the strikers from the looters.

Music is especially important to Dagny's character. When we first meet her, she is listening to music on a train:

She sat listening to the music. It was a symphony of triumph. The notes flowed up, they spoke of rising, and they were the rising itself, they were the essence and the form of upward motion, they seemed to embody every human act and thought that had ascent as its motive. . . .Somewhere on the edge of her mind, under the music, she heard the sound of train wheels. (1.1.2.3)

We actually learn Dagny's thoughts about and love of music, particularly Richard Halley's music, before we even learn her name. The style of this passage is notable; the sentence length is unusually long for this book, and the style is unusually fluid - there are no breaks between phrases. This may be a way to mimic the sound of the music itself and to emphasize Dagny's love of it. Her love of Halley's music, particularly his mysterious *Fifth Concerto*, signals her value system and the way in which she is already aligned, unknowingly, with the strike.

It is significant that music here is also linked to the sound of machinery and with motion. (Check out "Motors and Motion" below for more on this.) Galt's philosophy is a total one that united things like love, work, and happiness. So it's no mistake that music, which represents Dagny's views and philosophy, is directly tied to the railroad and Dagny's love of her work.

Halley's *Fifth Concerto* emerges as a recurring motif, or repeated symbol, throughout the book, most notably during the John Galt Line's opening and Dagny's introduction to Atlantis:

She heard the sound of the waterfall before she saw the fragile thread that fell in broken strips of glitter down the ledges. The sound came through some dim beat in her mind, some faint rhythm that seemed no louder than a struggling memory...but another sound seemed to grow clearer, rising, not in her mind, but from somewhere among the leaves...she knew that she was hearing [the Fifth Concerto*] now, hearing it rise from the keyboard of a piano*. (3.1.1.60)

Again, Halley's concerto is directly linked to the theme of rising and movement, which are cast in a positive light. It's also notable that the music is tied to sounds of nature and the natural world. This helps indicate the type of peaceful place that Atlantis is, a where industry, art, and nature are in harmony.

The other Halley piece that plays a major role for Dagny is his *Fourth Concerto*. This one is often described as "tortured," and it's the one Dagny recalls in moments of pain and doubt, as during her plane crash in Atlantis:

She heard a piece of music in her mind, one she seldom liked to recall; not Halley's Fifth Concerto*, but his* Fourth*, the cry of a tortured struggle, with the chords of its theme breaking through, like a distant vision to be reached*. (2.10.2.26)

At the other end of the spectrum are the negative sound motifs associated with the looters. An example is the mysterious Project X, which uses sound waves to create a deadly weapon.

The machine is named the Thompson Harmonizer after it is unveiled, and Dr. Ferris explains that "there are certain frequencies of sound vibration which no structure, organic or inorganic, can withstand." (3.3.1.59)

This is a great metaphor for the way the looters operate. They use "sound" - their speeches, dialogue, and ideas - to effectively

destroy the country. We see the effects of this destruction in the urban decay and in the individuals who are beaten down by the looters. It's no accident that characters like Hank and Dagny are perpetually unable to understand the looters and the seemingly meaningless and contradictory sounds coming out of their mouths. The looters' words are as deadly as their sound-wave weapon. While the music and sounds of Atlantis convey hope, the sounds linked with the looters bring destruction and even death.

Motors and Motion

If we had to pick one symbol to best represent the strike and Galt's values, we'd go with motors. Galt kicks off his strike by declaring that he'll "stop the motor of the world." He is also the nearly legendary inventor of "the motor" that Dagny discovers. This motor starts Dagny on a quest, which leads her to Galt and his strike. Apart from everything else he is, Galt is always mainly the "inventor of the motor" for Dagny:

But she knew that there was no meaning in motors or factories or trains, that their only meaning was in man's enjoyment of his life, which they served....She turned to Galt....She was looking at the inventor of the motor, but what she saw was the casual, easy figure of a workman in his natural setting. (3.1.1.73-76)

Motors serve as an expression and an embodiment of a certain philosophy here. Galt is fittingly the inventor of both the motor and a philosophical system that is embodied by motion.

Motors and movement are also closely linked to other characters in the strike. Dagny in particular is tied to motion; it's no coincidence that she runs a railroad. Both Dagny and Hank can fly airplanes, and we also see scenes of both of them driving cars. Motors and motion make up a major part of the values and the world of the strikers.

Education

After listening to all the speechifying of Galt and Co., it's easy to

come to the conclusion that the looters and their followers are morons. Why are all these people going along with a value system with so many problems? The answer has a lot to do with one of the book's recurring themes: the power of education.

We don't mean the power of education in a cheesy, "the more you know" sense. Actually, we mean the really dangerous power of education. A lot of the characters in this book, who are otherwise good people, can't seem to break away from the values they've had hammered into them since childhood. Galt's crusade against the country's educational system is a deep-seated, philosophical one, aimed at changing the very way people think.

We get some signs of how education is a problem right from the start, in a conversation between the young Eddie Willers and Dagny:

"Not just what you said. Not just business and earning a living. Things like winning battles, or saving people out of fires, or climbing mountains." "What for?" she asked. "The minister last Sunday said we must always reach for the best within us. What do you suppose is the best within us?" (1.1.1.27)

In this scene Eddie gives us an early hint that the country's religious education and value system may be a problem. As a kid, Eddie has an idea of heroics that is opposed to business. We quickly learn that this is a bad attitude to have in this book. The religious critique isn't explicit, but the fact that Eddie references a Sunday sermon is telling.

Dan Conway provides another example of education gone awry:

"Dan," she said through her teeth, "fight it."

He raised his head. His eyes were empty. "No," he said, "It would be wrong. I'm just selfish."

"Oh, damn that rotten tripe! You know better than that!" (1.4.6.31-33)

The victim of one of the looters' unjust laws, Dan Conway can't see his way past their rhetoric about sacrifice for the common good. It's a value he's probably been taught his whole life. The looters use people's educations and their commonly accepted ideas about morality to commit serious abuses of power.

Along with references to moral teachings, we get a lot of mentions of school, especially college. Patrick Henry University figures largely in the book; we hear a lot of the professors currently working there spouting off looter rhetoric and bad morals:

"There are no absolutes," said Dr. Pritchett [head of Philosophy at Patrick Henry University]. "Reality is only an illusion." (2.5.1.16)

We see the effect of that kind of teaching in the character of the Wet Nurse, Hank's Washington "advisor."

He never had an answer to "why?" He spoke in flat assertions. He would say about people "He's old-fashioned," "He's unreconstructed," "He's unadjusted," without hesitation or explanation; he would also say, while being a graduate in metallurgy, "Iron smelting, I think, seems to require high temperatures." He uttered nothing but uncertain opinions about physical nature - and nothing but categorical imperatives about men. (2.1.3.17)

The Wet Nurse, thanks to his education, has learned to judge people but not how to think independently. It requires a long, torturous journey for him to realize his errors, and he is tragically killed right as he comes to this realization.

The running theme of education helps emphasize the uphill battle Galt is fighting, and to show how easy it is for decent people to be blinded by really bad ways of thinking.

Lights and Darkness

This is a classic, if somewhat obvious, motif to use in characterizing the battle between the strikers and the looters.

However, light and dark do more than just stand in for the good guys and the bad guys here. The oncoming darkness hints at approaching disaster and the increasingly rapid decline of society. It represents not just the looters themselves, but the disastrous effects of their regime.

We kick things off with a creepy twilight scene that really sets the stage for impending doom and disaster:

The light was ebbing and Eddie Willers could not distinguish the bum's face....But from the sunset far at the end of the street, yellow glints caught his eyes, and the eyes looked straight at Eddie Willers, mocking and still - as if the question had been addressed to the causeless uneasiness within him. (1.1.1.2)

At one point Dagny and Owen Kellogg set out to find help for a broken-down train. They literally walk away from the light, which represents civilization here, into darkness, seeming to travel both back in time and to some sort of alien world:

Then she found herself watching the light on the ties under her feet, watching it ebb slowly, trying to hold it, to keep seeing its fading glow, until she knew that the hint of a glow on the wood was no longer anything but moonlight. She could not prevent the shudder that made her turn to look back. The headlight still hung behind them, like the liquid silver globe of a planet, deceptively close, but belonging to another orbit and another system. (2.10.2.89)

The light and dark symbolism are sometimes flipped around in the book. Sometimes the strike itself is tied to twilight and darkness in positive ways, and other times the looters are associated with light in very negative ways. Take this scene during the launch of the John Galt Line:

The cliffs ahead were a bright, liquid gold. Strips of shadow were lengthening the valley below. The sun was descending to the peaks in the west. They were going west, and up, toward the sun. The sky had deepened to the greenish-blue of the rails, when they saw smokestacks in a distant valley. (1.8.7.47)

In this scene the twilight is cast positively and is directly linked to the "blue-green" of Rearden Metal, one of the most positive things in the book. The scene of the train going up toward the sun is also a heroic image. In a way, the train is defiant in the face of darkness, proceeding along in spite of it, so it has a positive rather than an adversarial relationship with twilight and night. Another positive connection between darkness and the strike is the blackout of New York city at the end. This may seem like a terrible event, and it is, but the blackout also signals that Galt's quest is complete. He and his strikers can now start planning how to rebuild the world.

Light is rarely linked to the looters, but when it is, it takes on a rather sinister aspect. In this scene, light is harsh, highlighting the bad situation in which Dagny finds herself:

There was a beam of white light beating down upon the glittering metal of a microphone - in the center of a glass cage imprisoning her with Bertram Scudder. (3.3.3.1)

For the most part, light and darkness are used in the novel to represent good and evil, the strikers and the looters, in the traditional sense. The instances where the typical light and dark associations are reversed are worth noting, though.

Dollar Signs

If Galt and his strikers had a sports team, its logo would definitely be a dollar sign. Their super secret clubhouse, Atlantis, actually has a gigantic dollar sign hanging above it. (We'll let the decorating crowd decide whether or not that's in good taste.) The dollar sign is featured on the cigarettes produced in Atlantis, and it is also the emblem that Dagny scrawls on Nat Taggart's statue as a signal for the strikers to come get her.

Why have Galt and his strikers taken on the dollar sign as their symbol? We'll let Owen Kellogg explain it, since he gets to the point faster than Francisco in his wedding-crashing money speech in Chapter 2.2:

The dollar sign? [It stands] for a great deal. It stands on the vest of every fat, piglike figure in every cartoon, for the purpose of denoting a crook.... It stands - as the money of a free country - for achievement, for success, for ability, for man's creative power - and, precisely for these reasons, it is used as a brand of infamy....It stands for the United States. (2.10.2.177-179)

That is a lot. Dollar signs are an appropriate emblem of Galt's quest and his values because they represent the things his value system prizes: money, capitalism, and America. Money itself is seen as a product of people's hard work and ability, which are also highly prized in Galt's value system. The dollar sign is seen as negative by the looters, so it is fitting that Galt's system, which opposes everything about the looters, would adopt it as a symbol of pride.

Additional Symbols, Images, and Motifs

Here are some other symbols, images, and running themes worth mentioning that we discuss at other points in this guide:

- **Childhood:** You can read more about this running theme in the "Memory and the Past" theme section and in Dagny's "Character Analysis."
- **Time:** This theme is also discussed in the "Memory and the Past" theme section and is a large part of Ellis Wyatt's "Character Analysis."
- **Money:** You can find more on this in two thematic sections: the "Philosophical Viewpoints: Objectivism" theme section and the "Visions of America" theme section. The role money plays in the book is also discussed in Francisco's "Character Analysis."
- **Myths and Legends:** This is discussed in John Galt's "Character Analysis," and everyone's favorite ancestors Sebastián d'Anconia and Nat Taggart are discussed in their own "Character Analysis" sections, as well as in Francisco and Dagny's.
- **Images of Urban Decay:** You can find a discussion of this running theme in the "Setting" section.

Setting

New York, Colorado, Urban decay, 1950s "alternate universe" America

We really could have just put "the world" for the setting, or at the very least America. This is a sweeping book with a worldwide scope. We have characters traveling all over the continental United States, and we hear about events everywhere from Argentina to England. It's no mistake that one of our main characters runs a transcontinental railroad. This is a book about a whole country of people and problems. There are a few main locations, though, that each embody certain sets of ideals and values.

New York

Our umbrella setting isn't so much a place as it is a state of affairs: urban decay. The very first scene we get in the novel is a description of a creepy and gloomy New York City:

The clouds and the shafts of skyscrapers against them were turning brown, like an old painting in oil, the color of a fading masterpiece. Long streaks of grime ran from under the pinnacles down the slender soot-eaten walls. (1.1.1.12)

Talk about your symbolic language - these dirty old skyscrapers represent the city as a whole. New York in this world is only a shadow of its former self, a "fading masterpiece." Evidence of poverty and decay is everywhere. And we see the same scenes repeated all across the country, from Philadelphia to Starnesville, Wisconsin.

But we don't spend that much time on the streets in New York. Most of our time is spent at Dagny's apartment or the Taggart Transcontinental headquarters. Both are often described as beacons in the night, or safe havens of civilization amongst the

grime and decay.

The other home we spend the most amount of time in, Hank Rearden's house outside of Philadelphia, is part beacon, part suffocating trap. Hank's house itself might not show evidence of decline, but the people inside it do. James Taggart's New York apartment also serves the same function; it is a civilized, wealthy space that covers up the moral and spiritual decay that it houses.

It's rather fitting that we spend time in both the businesses and the homes of major characters. Personal and professional lives are highly connected in the novel, and the settings reflect this.

Colorado

After New York, our other major setting is Colorado. In contrast to New York, Colorado starts out as a booming, energetic place, best characterized by the exciting and successful train ride Dagny takes on the opening day of her John Galt Railroad Line. But Colorado soon falls victim to the economic depression and urban decay sweeping through the rest of the country.

Atlantis

The setting shifts after this. We began with Colorado contrasting to New York and we end with Atlantis, incidentally in Colorado, contrasting to the rest of the country. Atlantis is the name of Galt's secret hideaway, and it seems like some sort of heaven on earth compared to the rest of America. Everything in Atlantis is prosperous, peaceful, and beautiful. This includes the buildings, the landscape, and the people living there. For a book so concerned with philosophy, it's no mistake that Atlantis is an idyllic community, the headquarters of Galt's moral strike. New York, on the other hand, is a central location for the bad business and government plaguing the country, and it shows signs of physical decay accordingly.

1950s America

The last thing to talk about in terms of setting is time period. This book reflects a sort of alternate universe 1950s America. As in real 1950s America, we see a lot of gender inequality: most women don't have jobs and they suffer from sexism. We also see evidence of overly oppressive communist governments, which the real 1950s America was very concerned about. At the time this book was published, the Cold War - a political, military, and ideological conflict between America and the Soviet Union - was going strong, and the world of *Atlas Shrugged* reflects a lot of Cold War issues in its political plot points and philosophies.

Tough-o-Meter

(8) Snow Line

This is not an easy book. It's insanely long, dense, complicated, half the time you don't know what's going on (it is a mystery, but still), there seem to be hundreds of characters (was Ayn Rand channeling Dickens?), and there's an entire chapter devoted to philosophy. But this book is also wildly entertaining in parts. There's a lot of really great characters to follow, and some exciting sequences, like a dramatic plane crash. The language itself is also pretty easy to follow; it's the ideas that get tricky. This is the point of the book, though - it makes you think and challenges your preconceptions. Overall it can be slow reading, but it's also really thought-provoking and entertaining.

Genre

Dystopian Literature, Mystery, Philosophical Literature, Psychological Thriller and Suspense, Quest, Science Fiction

That's a long list, but this book is crazy long, so it's not surprising that it incorporates a lot of different genres. We'll break it down into bite-sized pieces.

First up, **dystopian literature**. A dystopia (opposite of utopia) is a world where everything has gone wrong. The world of *Atlas Shrugged* certainly fits the bill. This book's plot tracks the course of an entire country's downfall, looking at the economic, political, social, and moral decline of a nation. We get all the hallmarks of a dystopia here: terrible and oppressive government, bad economic times, destructive philosophies (the looters), and the launch of a rebellion (Galt's strike).

Next up, **mystery**. The book starts off with a question: Who is John Galt? Like any good mystery, this book follows a number of overlapping and evolving mysteries. Just when one is solved, another one pops up. Questions lead to more questions and, though we get clues along the way, we are often left to ponder the various mysteries alongside our main, and very confused, characters.

A lot of the mysteries our main characters try to solve have to do with big **ideas and philosophies**, which brings us to our next genre. The book ambitiously seeks to lay out an entire philosophical system for us. We get to see Galt's philosophy and the philosophical errors of our heroes and antagonists in action. Throughout the book, characters are constantly delivering philosophical speeches.

The philosophy doesn't detract from the plot, though; on the contrary, it's a crucial part of it, sort of the umbrella genre here. Philosophy is at the heart of the dystopian ideas, the book's mysteries, and another major genre, the **psychological thriller**.

Philosophy has to do with what people think, after all, which makes psychology a major part of the book. We get a lot of detail about our characters' states of mind, and particularly their stress levels as they try to solve various mysteries (hence the thriller part).

Characters try to solve all these mysteries and untangle all these philosophical puzzles, which also makes this book part of the **quest** genre. Galt's strike itself is a heroic and epic quest that spans the entire novel.

The last genre is **science fiction**, which might seem like a stretch - after all, it's not like there are aliens in the book. But we do have an alternate universe here that is more technologically advanced than the real America of the 1950s. So for instance we have technology like Galt's "heat shield," his "motor" that uses static electricity, the deadly sound waves of Project X, etc. These weird technologies add to the creepy atmosphere of the book and complement the other genres at work here.

Book Summary/Plot Overview

Rand kicks things off with dread and doom. The world is in serious trouble: the economy is tanking, and the government is becoming crazy-oppressive. But fear not: we meet two heroic businesspeople who might just be savvy enough to keep the country going. Hank Rearden and Dagny Taggart team up on a major mission: to build a railroad to provide all the up-and-coming businesses in Colorado with transportation for their merchandise. Hank and Dagny succeed, with the help of some other good businesspeople, and the John Galt Line, which uses a special metal that Hank invented, is a success.

Who is John Galt? Well, the whole world is wondering that. While all this is going on, more and more talented people are mysteriously disappearing, and John Galt may just have something to do with it. But Hank and Dagny are more concerned with other things now. The two begin a romantic relationship and a new quest: to find the inventor of an abandoned high-tech motor that could transform the world. The search leads them all over the country, where they are increasingly confronted with evidence of the bad economy and government.

Things begin going rapidly downhill for Hank and Dagny. The government, a sleazy crowd of politicians and businesspeople (including Dagny's weasel of a brother James), passes a series of laws that restrict people's freedoms. These laws particularly target successful industrialists and make business, and life, hard and miserable. More and more industrialists disappear and Dagny becomes obsessed with tracking down the "destroyer" of the world.

Hank, meanwhile, is coming to some painful personal realizations about his family life and his morals. He is being helped along by the mysterious Francisco d'Anconia, a supposed playboy who used to date Dagny and is somehow connected to the "destroyer." Dagny sets off on a desperate solo quest to stop

a scientist from quitting his job and disappearing. While following the scientist, Dagny crashes her plane in Colorado.

When she wakes up, she finds herself in the secret hideaway of none other than John Galt and his fellow strikers. This valley is often referred to as Galt's Gulch by the strikers, though Dagny calls it Atlantis. Galt is both the inventor of the motor and the "destroyer," and he's calling talented people together to go on strike in order to show the government how harmful their policies are. Galt and his followers refuse to cooperate with an oppressive regime, which they call the "looters."

Galt has been in love with Dagny for years, and she quickly falls for him too. But Dagny can't bring herself to stay on strike in Galt's Gulch, since she still feels she can fight the terrible government. Dagny returns home and has an amicable breakup with Hank, who shortly thereafter joins the strike and leaves for Atlantis.

After things in the world become even worse, Galt makes a long radio address, outlining his philosophy and asking people to stop going along with the bad government policies. But Galt is captured by the government shortly thereafter and is tortured. Dagny, helped by Hank, Francisco, and other strikers, rescues Galt, and the group flees for Atlantis as the country's infrastructure collapses. At the very end, Galt and his strikers make plans to return to the world and to fix it.

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Volume 1, Chapter 1

Characters Involved

Eddie Willers, James Taggart, Dagny Taggart, Owen Kellogg

Summary

The Theme

- We open with a question: Who is John Galt?
- Spoiler alert: this won't be answered until Part 3, which is hundreds of pages from now. So buckle in for a long (and wacky) ride, boys and girls.
- Eddie Willers is walking down the street when he hears this question. It is sunset, and Eddie has a sense of dread and doom. Doom!
- The man who asked the book's favorite question is a bum. Eddie gives him some change.
- We learn that bums are really common in the city. Sounds like the economy sucks.
- The bum asks Eddie why the John Galt question bothers him, and Eddie tells him to go away.
- Eddie ponders his weird sense of dread and doom; he can't remember when it started. Eddie is 32.
- The city looks like it's dying in the twilight, but Eddie quickly dismisses that thought and decides that he's being morbid. Doom!
- There's a gigantic calendar on top of one of the buildings, which adds to the doom of the scene, for Eddie at least. The date is September 2.
- Eddie reaches Fifth Avenue, which tells us that he's in New York. He's relieved to be on a busy street with signs of life.
- Childhood flashback time! Eddie remembers how he used to spend his summers on the Taggart estate with the

Taggart kids. Both Grandpa and Papa Willers worked for the Taggarts.

- One summer, when Eddie was seven, a lightning bolt struck this strong oak tree that Eddie loved and it completely wrecked his sense of security. Eddie isn't quite sure why seeing the tree broken in half was so traumatic, or why he still remembers it.
- Eddie decides to think about positive childhood memories instead, and recalls a summer when he was ten. He was talking with his childhood BFF, who was telling him about the business she would start when she grew up. Eddie said he would do something great with her someday, not just run a business. The girl ignored the dig against business and looked off at a railroad track.
- Poor Eddie doesn't understand why the world is so screwed up and why people have problems doing the right thing.
- Eddie arrives at the big and impressive Taggart Transcontinental building. Taggart Transcontinental is a railroad company, and Eddie works at its headquarters.
- Taggart Transcontinental's slogan is "From Ocean to Ocean." Eddie mentally adds "forever" to the end of the slogan, which he thinks makes it sound even more majestic.
- Eddie goes to have a meeting with James Taggart, the president of the railroad.
- James is 39, has bad posture, is pale and flabby, and looks tired. It seems that we're not supposed to like him.
- Then James is rude to Eddie, who seems nice thus far.
- Eddie stalls and glances at a map in James's office. He checks out the Rio Norte line and quickly stops looking at it once he reaches El Paso. Does Eddie have it in for Mexico? Is he haunted by some bad Spring Break memories? We shall see.
- Actually, Eddie has a problem with the Rio Norte line because it's a piece of junk and losing money. There was another wreck on it just today.
- James, whom Eddie calls Jim, doesn't want to hear about it.
- Eddie insists that they need to do something about the Rio

Norte Line because it's a piece of junk. The guy who was supposed to deliver steel for a new track, Orren Boyle, is late yet again. (If Orren Boyle were around today, he'd be set as a TV journalist, with a name like that.)

- James talks in circles around the issue and tells Eddie that he'd better not bring up Rearden Steel. James sounds like he can't even decide what to order for lunch, much less hurt Eddie, so Eddie is probably safe saying whatever he wants.
- Jimmy whines about how none of this is his fault, how Orren is his BFF and he can't take his business elsewhere (even though Orren sounds totally incompetent), then gripes about the Phoenix-Durango line. Phoenix Durango sounds super old Westerney and fun. Maybe it's one of those dinner-theater trains where they stage fake train robberies and have all the staff dress up like cowboys.
- Actually, Phoenix-Durango is a super good railroad that is kicking Taggart Transcontinental's ass.
- Eddie points out that Phoenix-Durango is a great line and they are losing business to them, like the Ellis Wyatt oil fields.
- James hates Ellis Wyatt.
- We learn that Ellis Wyatt is a genius who managed to start up super successful oil fields in Colorado, which is apparently the new industrial hub of America.
- James complains some more about how people used to be satisfied with Taggart Transcontinental, and these new people and companies are just messing everything up.
- Eddie wonders where James went to business school. Maybe he missed the lecture on the Facts of Life: Competition and Change. Eddie tells James to quit whining about the good old days and do something productive.
- Instead, James whines some more and says it's not his fault the competition is creaming them.
- James then accuses Eddie of being a feudal serf to the Taggarts, and Eddie is like, that still doesn't fix the railroad, fool.
- Subject change again: James insists that the San Sebastián Mines in Mexico are going to make them tons of money.

- Eddie starts to point out that James's sister disagrees, but James cuts him off.
- Finally Eddie gives up and leaves.
- He finds everyone getting ready to go home except the chief clerk, Pop Harper, who is fixing his own typewriter. Pop says that everything is falling apart and that when his typewriter breaks down for good he won't be able to get a new one. He finishes his spiel by asking, "Who is John Galt?" Doom!
- We break to a new scene. An attractive young woman is riding on a train, in a compartment by herself. She's listening to some music and trying to relax.
- The music reminds her of her favorite composer, Richard Halley, but she knows all his work and doesn't recognize this song.
- This jolts her out of her daze, and she realizes that she's hearing someone whistling.
- She goes to ask the person whistling to name the tune, and he says it's Halley's *Fifth Concerto*.
- The woman says he only wrote four, and the guy quickly says he made a mistake.
- The woman won't let it go, though, and continues to question him about it. (If there's a Halley concerto she doesn't know about, she'll have to resign as president of the Richard Halley Fan Club.)
- Finally the woman gives up and goes back to her car. She lets the sound of the train wheels lull her to sleep and wakes up to discover that the train has stopped.
- She gets off and finds the workers running the train just standing around next to a red signal light.
- She asks them what's up and they say that the signal light is broken and they're waiting for it to change to green.
- The woman thinks this is stupid and says so. The workers say they won't risk their jobs by running a red light. They have to wait for orders or for someone to come to fix it.
- The woman tells them to do something, since this train is the Comet, and it's never been late.
- One of the men just asks who John Galt is. (We sense a theme there.)
- Now the woman snaps out orders to them, and they ask

who died and made her queen.

- Turns out she is queen, though, at least of this railroad. This is Dagny Taggart, James's sister, Eddie's BFF, and the VP of Taggart Transcontinental.
- The men are duly impressed and scramble to obey her orders.
- As she walks off, one of the men asks who Dagny is, and another guy tells him that she's the Vice President of Operations and the person who actually runs the whole railroad.
- Dagny is still anxious even when the train starts moving again. She thinks everything is falling apart.
- She gets back to work and thinks about how she needs to fire the loser running their Ohio Division (whom James hired) and replace him with a cool guy named Owen Kellogg. She thinks that good men are getting harder and harder to find.
- Later the Comet pulls into Taggart Transcontinental station in New York. Dagny is thrilled to be back home and gets off the train whistling Halley's *Fifth Concerto*.
- Then she notices the young man who was whistling it before staring at her. Doom!
- We break to a new scene: Dagny is meeting with James and Eddie, who we now learn is Dagny's assistant.
- Dagny has been away on a business trip. She tells James that she'll save the Rio Norte line even though it's a piece of junk, and that she's already ordered the steel for it from Rearden Steel.
- James is appalled, but when Dagny tells him to call Rearden and cancel the order, he quickly backpedals.
- Dagny says that Rearden is faster and cheaper than Orren Boyle, who is a loser. She's cancelled their contract with Boyle.
- James tries to argue that he doesn't like Henry Rearden personally, and Dagny says that has nothing to do with saving a railroad.
- She then drops another bombshell: she didn't actually order steel, she ordered Rearden Metal, which is some sort of new metal alloy that is super awesome.
- Rearden Metal just hit the market, and so far Dagny is its

only customer.
- James is even more freaked out by this because change is bad. Doom!
- Dagny says that she's a freaking engineer (college degree and everything). She has studied Rearden Metal and thinks it's super cool, so James can stuff it.
- James just complains some more about change and hypercompetitive businesspeople.
- Then they discuss the situation in Mexico. The Rio Norte Line is called the San Sebastián Line south of the border. Dagny says that Mexico is going to nationalize it soon, which means the government will own it and the Taggarts will lose a ton of money.
- James gets even more freaked out by this prospect and reacts by essentially putting his fingers in his ears and loudly yelling "la la la."
- Dagny gets them back on the subject of the awesomeness of Rearden Metal.
- James thinks that Dagny is too cold and practical - she freaks him out.
- Dagny rambles on about Hank Rearden. James says she should call him Henry. Among his other attributes, James is apparently a stick-in-the-mud too.
- Finally Dagny tells her brother to just say yes or no to Rearden Metal.
- He tells her to go ahead but makes it clear that she's taking responsibility for the whole thing.
- James's parting shot is to tell Dagny that she isn't human and has no feelings. Dagny is the Final Cylon! Oh wait. Dagny quietly agrees with James and walks out.
- Eddie is upset on her behalf but remains silent.
- When they reach her office, Eddie tells her that Owen Kellogg wants a meeting. Dagny says to send him up.
- While waiting she calls Richard Halley's publishing company and asks them if he wrote a Fifth Concerto. The man on the phone laughs and says no. Dagny hangs up.
- Owen Kellogg comes in and tells Dagny that he's refusing her job offer.
- Dagny is surprised and asks why.
- He tells her that, for personal reasons, he can no longer

work for Taggart Transcontinental. Dagny won't accept that.

- He tells Dagny that he wanted to tell her in person because he respects her.
- Dagny is depressed and again asks why. Owen just replies with our favorite question: Who is John Galt? Thus concludes the opening chapter of omens and doom.

Volume 1, Chapter 2

Characters Involved

Hank Rearden, Lillian Rearden, Mrs. Rearden, Philip Rearden, Paul Larkin

Summary

The Chain

- This chapter has nothing to do with the Fleetwood Mac song, as far as we can tell.
- Fun fact: the title refers to a line that one of our characters will say at the end of the chapter. Tons of chapter titles in this book reference lines from characters, so we'll be on the lookout for them.
- Random people are riding a Taggart train through Pennsylvania and they see some lights out the window. Turns out it's the Rearden Steel mills. We're guessing we'll be meeting Henry (Hank) Rearden shortly.
- Exciting stuff is going down at Rearden Steel tonight: the very first batch of Rearden Metal is being poured.
- There's a handsome blond man watching the metal being poured. Who could it be?
- Your first two guesses don't count, cause it's totally Hank Rearden.
- Hank is in a pensive, thoughtful, mood. He's worked on developing his super awesome metal for ten years, which is a long time, if you ask us.
- He has a bracelet of the metal in his pocket.
- He considers everything in his life that has led up to this moment of triumph - all the hard work and late nights - and how he hopes everyone will be using his metal in the future.
- Hank normally doesn't dwell on the past, but he lets

himself ponder it tonight, since it's such a momentous occasion.

- He recalls his start as a miner in Minnesota - how he nearly gave up one night because he was so tired, but forced himself to keep going. He faced down lots of doubters and haters over the years. Go Hank!
- The metal that was just poured is going to be used for the Taggart Transcontinental railways.
- We learn that Hank plans to give the bracelet in his pocket to his wife.
- Hank is in a great mood and wants to talk with someone, because he's so excited. He thinks he needs a giant electrical Rearden Life sign to proclaim his awesomeness to the world.
- He quickly comes down from his high, though, once he gets home to his family: his mom, his brother Philip, a guy named Paul Larkin, and his wife Lillian.
- These people proceed to prove how awful they are. First, they call Hank Henry.
- Second, they complain about how he's late and groan that Henry always causes problems by being a workaholic.
- Hank tries not to get too frustrated by his obnoxious family.
- They all continue to complain to Hank. Lillian mocks him, his mother scolds him, and Philip goes all preachy and talks about how Hank is an evil capitalist or something.
- Lillian mentions a party she wants to give on December 10, which is their wedding anniversary. Hank had forgotten that fact, so he might have some of his family's ill-will coming.
- Hank announces that he poured the first batch of Rearden Metal, but his family couldn't care less. They are rather vocal about this and make fun of him for being a conceited workaholic.
- Lillian even mocks the bracelet that Hank gives her. Clearly, she is evil.
- Hank tries to figure out why his family is so awful and why he doesn't like them at all. Psst, Hank! The two things are related! Don't worry, you'll work it out in about 800 pages.

- Paul Larkin pipes up and warns Hank that he's not popular, which is very bad.
- Hank says he's not running for Prom King and he doesn't care.
- Larkin tries to hint that people in Washington (politicians) could start causing problems for Hank and his created-by-fairies-miracle-metal, but Hank is clueless.
- Philip starts complaining about his hard day of unemployment. It seems that Philip "works" for an organization called Friends of Global Progress (which sounds about as legit as George's fake People Fund charity on *Seinfeld*.)
- Apparently, the Friends of Global Progress distribute folk music and promote cooperative farming ideas around the world. They're having trouble raising money.
- Philip whines and insults Hank until Hank agrees to give FoGP some money. But then Philip asks Hank to leave his name off the check, since the FoGP consider Hank and evil industrialist and don't really want his money. They'll take it, though.
- Lillian then uses her Rearden Metal and says something to the effect that Hank keeps the family in chains with all his money.

Volume 1, Chapter 3

Characters Involved

James Taggart, Paul Larkin, Orren Boyle, Wesley Mouch, Eddie Willers, Dagny Taggart, Nat Taggart

Summary

The Top and the Bottom

- Some men are having a business meeting in a fancy skyscraper club that looks like a root cellar, for some reason. Perhaps the cave-like atmosphere is in this season?
- The men are James Taggart, ineffective steel mogul Orren Boyle, Paul Larkin (last seen at Hank Rearden's pad), and Wesley Mouch, who has an unfortunate last name.
- They are all discussing, in a very roundabout way, What Is Wrong With America.
- Basically, all these guys sound like they've been reading a lot of Karl Marx. They keep saying things like capitalism is bad, monopolies are evil, "anti-social" attitudes are bad, and progressive social policy is super cool. We gather from their discussion that they're communists.
- Historical Context Lesson Time! When this book was published in 1957 the Cold War was still going strong. In the Cold War you basically had democratic, capitalist America pitted against the communist Soviet Union. This book never comes out and makes a direct reference to the Cold War, since it's more of an alternate universe America, but readers at the time would have recognized the stuff Taggart and Co. are saying as communist ideas. A lot of Americans at the time thought that the Soviet Union was basically hell on earth, so they would have seen Taggart and Co. as pretty evil.

- Back to the Super Secret Communist Club Meeting.
- This is the vaguest meeting ever. The guys all hint around about "preserving the steel industry" and suggest that they are going to force Hank Rearden to cooperate with them and their communist ways. Doom! (We think, at least. This is all really vague and weird.)
- Also, everyone pressures Paul Larkin to promise his "friendship" to them in the future. There is clearly some shady, backroom business dealing going on here. Favors are being traded and whatnot.
- The group then starts discussing Orren Boyle's trip to Mexico. Mexico is a "People's State" now, which basically means that it's communist. (Like the "People's Republic of China" today.)
- Orren asks James what's up with the terrible train service on the Taggart line in Mexico.
- James is shocked to find out that Taggart Transcontinental is only running one junky old train a day in Mexico.
- We learn that Wesley Mouch works for Hank Rearden as his Washington connection - sort of like a lobbyist.
- The club meeting adjourns and James runs off to yell at his sister about the train in Mexico.
- Scene break.
- It's flashback time! We learn that Dagny, at age nine, decided she was going to run Taggart Transcontinental one day.
- Dagny was bored as a child since she was so much smarter than everyone around her and had big dreams.
- She told Eddie about her plans for the future at age twelve, but at age fifteen she realized that women didn't usually run gigantic businesses. That bothered her for about two seconds, then she decided that she'd run her railroad anyway.
- Dagny started working for the railroad as a night operator at sixteen, while James went to work for the public relations department.
- Dagny studied engineering in college, which was also unusual for a girl at the time.
- We learn that Dagny skyrocketed up the ranks of Taggart

Transcontinental, since she was so much smarter than everyone else. She couldn't figure out why all the rest were such talentless hacks, and found herself constantly facing off against inept morons.

- More flashback info: we learn that the shortcomings of the San Sebastián line are mainly the fault of a man named Francisco d'Anconia, an international playboy/heir. He runs a giant copper company out of Argentina.
- Turns out Francisco opened up the San Sebastián mine in Mexico and James decided, for some inexplicable reason, to build a line from Texas to the mines. The line was a terrible idea and cost Taggart Transcontinental tons of money.
- Apparently, politicians thought the project would be great, since it would help diplomatic relations with Mexico. Dagny couldn't care less about diplomacy; she's more concerned with how much money they'll lose building the thing.
- Ironically, the project wouldn't have been finished at all if Dagny hadn't taken over.
- Dagny gave Jim an ultimatum when she was 32: he could either make her VP, or she'd quit. So James promoted her, even though women weren't normally VPs of anything, and Dagny got the San Sebastián line finished.
- Back to the present! James confronts Dagny and we learn that Dagny deliberately left one crappy train running in Mexico. She knows the government there is about to nationalize (take over) the San Sebastián line, so she didn't want to leave them anything worth having, or stealing.
- James is appalled - he thinks that's mean. Poor Mexico needs help. But James is also freaked out by the idea of losing money. (Apparently, he wants to have his cake and eat it too.)
- We learn that Dagny knows the playboy Francisco and used to be friends with him. Interesting.
- Dagny leaves her office after her latest spat with James.
- On the way out of the building, Dagny stops to say hi to the massive statue of Nathaniel Taggart, her ancestor and the founder of Taggart Transcontinental.

- The statue is in the main concourse, the train station terminal on the first floor of the Taggart building (sort of like a fictionalized Grand Central).
- Turns out that Nat Taggart did all sorts of hardcore stuff, like possibly murdering a state legislator who was hassling him and offering up his wife as security on a loan. (She agreed to it, by the way.)
- Dagny thinks that Nat Taggart was fierce and wants to be just like him.
- After paying homage to Nat, Dagny stops by a newsstand to chat with her buddy, an old man who runs the newsstand and collects cigarettes as a hobby.
- Old Newsstand Man is filled with doom and dread. He gripes about how the world is going to hell in a handbasket, and he and Dagny agree that they don't like the creepy "Who is John Galt?" question.
- Scene break! Eddie is talking to a mystery man in the Taggart Transcontinental cafeteria. (We'll call him Mystery Worker, since the dude apparently works for the railroad.)
- We can't hear anything that Mystery Worker says to Eddie, which is...mysterious. We only hear Eddie's side of the conversation.
- Eddie is a little Chatty Cathy and tells the Mystery Worker all about the problems with the Rio Norte Line, and how their contractor (a certain McNamara) is their last hope.
- Eddie then mentions Dagny, and the Mystery Worker apparently asks a question about her, which turns him into Mystery Stalker. He wants to know what Dagny does on her time off. Creepy!
- Eddie, clearly not having watched enough Lifetime movies, spills the beans and tells Mystery Worker that Dagny is a bit antisocial. She works her butt off all day then goes home and listens to Richard Halley records - the only thing she loves aside from the railroad.

Volume 1, Chapter 4

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Dick McNamara, Richard Halley, Dan Conway, James Taggart, Ellis Wyatt, Hank Rearden

Summary

The Immovable Movers

- Dagny has just returned from a trip to the United Locomotive Works in New Jersey, where she had to deal with more idiots.
- She's starting to suspect that the whole world is in on some big secret that she's clueless about. She can't understand why people are so vague and incompetent and doesn't know how to communicate with them.
- Dagny decides the world needs Motive Power, which we suspect is a metaphor. We shall see.
- It's pretty late when Dagny gets to her office, and Eddie is the only one still there.
- He tells her that McNamara, their last hope, has quit. Uh oh.
- No one knows why he quit or where he's gone, which is weird.
- Dagny is shocked and doesn't know what to do - the Rio Norte Line repairs seem screwed.
- Dagny leaves the office to think and passes a series of images of cultural decline. For instance, the current best-selling book is called *The Vulture is Molting*. We would pay good money to read that gem.
- It's about a greedy, depraved businessman.
- Dagny then spies a couple stumbling out of a nightclub, looking both trashed and trashy.
- At any rate, the whole cultural decline thing has about as

much subtlety as a sledgehammer.
- Dagny arrives home to her classy apartment and puts on some Richard Halley music.
- We learn that no one knows what has happened to Richard Halley. He struggled for years to make it as a composer and, after finally achieving success, he quit and disappeared.
- He quit on the opening night of his opera, called *Phaethon*, based on a Greek myth.
- Context Lesson Time! OK, so in Greek mythology, Phaethon was the son of the sun god, Helios. On Take Your Kid to Work Day, Phaethon decided he wanted to do his dad's job, which consisted of driving a chariot across the sky with the sun in tow - to make the sun rise. Oh, those wacky Greeks. Anyway, Phaethon apparently didn't have his learner's permit. He ended up losing control of the sun-chariot and died. The moral of the story: always take a driver's ed class before getting behind the wheel of a sun-chariot.
- Halley, though, changed the story around and had Phaethon succeed. Halley is apparently something of a romantic optimist.
- Dagny was in the audience the night Halley's opera opened.
- After chilling to some tunes, Dagny looks over at the newspaper and has a mild freakout when she sees Francisco's face on the front page. The story is about his adulterous affair with a Mrs. Gilbert Vail, and her upcoming divorce trial.
- Dagny is massively upset after reading this. The plot thickens.
- Scene break! We're back to James again.
- James is having an affair himself, with some woman named Betty Pope.
- Betty goes up a notch in our book when she tells James that he looks like a snail first thing in the morning.
- James is bragging about his upcoming board meeting, where he and his cronies plan to smack down Dagny for being smarter than them.
- But then James gets a panicky phone call from an

underling. Mexico has just nationalized the San Sebastián mine and railroad line. Whoops.
- Scene cut again, *in medias res* this time (a fancy term for starting in the middle).
- James is in the middle of a big speech, taking credit for Dagny's foresight. Since he saw this nationalization business coming a mile away, he says, he took all the valuable Taggart equipment out of Mexico.
- He then offers up the names of a few scapegoats the railroad can fire in order to save face. James is also a massive punk.
- Later James is hanging out with his BFF Orren. The two complain about how they lost tons of money in Mexico, and we learn that Francisco refuses to speak to James since he finds him boring. Francisco might be all right after all.
- Later still: the National Alliance of Railroads has passed an "Anti-Dog-Eat-Dog Rule." Basically it acts like a bailout for big railroads that aren't performing well, like Taggart Transcontinental. Who is paying for the bailout? Smaller railroads, which basically have to give up business to the bigger ones.
- This spells doom for Phoenix-Durango, everyone's favorite Old West railroad. Phoenix-Durango is mainly a regional line out west in places like Arizona and Colorado. They will now have to give up business to Taggart, since the super-cool Phoenix-Durango has been stealing all of Taggart's customers in Colorado.
- So, imagine you get an A on a quiz and your classmate gets a C. Using this same logic, you would have to deduct points off your own grade and donate them to your classmate so that you'd both get Bs.
- The president of Phoenix-Durango, a nice older man named Dan Conway, is devastated by this rule. He's going to lose his Colorado customers, which will ruin his business.
- Dagny is furious when she finds out about the rule.
- She rushes to see Dan Conway and tries to convince him to fight it.
- But poor Dan is tired and beaten. He can't figure out why

people would set out to ruin him like this.

- Dagny is beside herself with anger. She wanted to beat Dan fair and square in a competition for Colorado customers, not have them all stolen from Dan and handed to her.
- Dan takes pity on Dagny. He tells her that she has to get her Rio Norte line up and running fast, since all the industrialists in Colorado are counting on having reliable transportation for their merchandise. It's a quest!
- Quick Context Lesson: What's with this freakout over the railroads? Well, remember, back in the day trains were the way stuff got moved around. There weren't eighteen-wheeler trucks cruising around yet, so lots of people traveled on trains and most businesses shipped their goods to various places by train. So for the Coloradans, not having a decent railway is a disaster.
- Later Dagny is back at her office when she gets a visitor. It's Ellis Wyatt, oil mogul from Colorado!
- Ellis is pissed about losing Dan Conway and gives Dagny an ultimatum: either she gets him decent rail service before the Phoenix-Durango in Colorado shuts down in nine months, or he will take her business down with him.
- Dagny says: game on dude. You will totally have your railway up and running in nine months.
- This takes the wind of out Ellis's sails. He says, OK then, and then leaves rather anticlimactically. No throw-down.
- Later still: Dagny is having a meeting with Hank Rearden. Good times.
- She tells him about her epic quest to save Colorado and how she now needs a ton of steel from him even sooner than before, since she only has nine months to get her line done.
- Hank assures Dagny that he's got her back. Then he gives her a pep talk about how they are like two industrial superheroes who will save the country from its own stupidity.
- Hank and Dagny start to make plans for the future. Hank wants to open a factory in Colorado, since that's where all the cool kids are.
- Hank then shows Dagny her order of Rearden Metal being

poured outside the window, and the two get excited about all the cool possibilities for Rearden Metal in the future. They get along very well and could even be considered friends.

Volume 1, Chapter 5

Characters Involved

Francisco d'Anconia, Dagny Taggart, Eddie Willers, James Taggart

Summary

The Climax of the d'Anconias

- Eddie brings Dagny a newspaper with a interesting story: turns out Francisco D'Anconia's San Sebastián Mines were totally worthless. How was he not aware of that?
- Well, Dagny thinks he was and this was his idea of an elaborate, expensive, and mean practical joke.
- She goes to confront him at the Wayne-Falkland Hotel, which is where he's staying while in New York.
- Mega Flashback Time! Seriously, it's a long one. If you were wondering how Dagny knew Francisco, be prepared for answers galore.
- Turns out Eddie and Dagny had another childhood BFF: Francisco, whom they called Frisco.
- The Taggarts and the D'Anconias were old friends, and their kids spent a month together every summer on the Taggart estate.
- Francisco doesn't care for James at all and considers the Taggart kids to be Dagny and Eddie.
- Francisco has the equivalent of a Nat Taggart in his family, one Sebastián D'Anconia. Sebastián came over from Spain in ye olden days and worked hard for fifteen years to get a copper mine up and running in Argentina. He then sent for his girlfriend, who had waited for him all that time. (Now that's hard-core devotion.)
- Frisco is two years older than Dagny. He called her "slug" as a kid, which is a word for a fire in an old locomotive

firebox. (Old trains were powered by wood-burning engines, just FYI.)
- Every summer the three musketeers had great adventures.
- One summer, when he was twelve, Frisco got a job working for Taggart Transcontinental, just for fun. Mrs. Taggart thinks all the kids are weird.
- The young Francisco is good at everything, from driving motorboats to doing math.
- As the oldest, Frisco often teaches Dagny and Eddie how to do things, like dive off cliffs or hitch rides on trains without getting caught.
- He and Eddie and Dagny spend their time building things, taking things apart to see how they work, and bumming rides on Taggart trains for fun.
- Frisco and Dagny also spend time planning their futures, and how they'll run awesome businesses some day.
- Frisco is such a super genius that he goes off to college at age sixteen. He attends the fictional Patrick Henry University in Cleveland.
- There's a growing tension between Frisco and Dagny once they hit their teen years.
- James still acts like a wet blanket and is always lecturing Francisco about being arrogant and selfish. We learn that James is attending a fancy-pants school in New York.
- When Frisco returns from his first year at college we learn that he's made two good friends. (Lots more on them to come.)
- He and Dagny discuss their shared values and decide that working hard and doing your work well is the most important thing in life.
- Dagny then says that maybe she'll deliberately get bad grades, though, so that she can try out being popular in school for a change.
- Frisco slaps her.
- Dagny is actually happy about this, since she realizes she struck a nerve and that Frisco cares about her a lot and doesn't want her to sell herself short. Twisted, Dagny.
- Francisco is happy Dagny isn't pressing charges for assault. Just kidding - he actually just thinks Dagny is hard-core and awesome.

- Dagny is fifteen that summer. We learn that the following summer she starts working as the Night Operator at the Rockdale Taggart station.
- Mrs. Taggart is getting concerned about how weird her daughter is. By age seventeen Dagny has never had a boyfriend and all she seems to care about is engineering and work.
- So Mrs. Taggart throws a debutante ball for Dagny, which is a way of introducing her to high society.
- We learn that Dagny was named after Nathaniel Taggart's wife. (Interesting tidbit.)
- Dagny actually has fun getting primped for the ball, and Mrs. Taggart is pleasantly surprised.
- But after the party Dagny is depressed by all the phony people and says she didn't have fun at all.
- That summer Francisco returns, and the tension goes up a notch between them.
- They have a tennis game that is particularly violent and lasts for hours. It's essentially like extended foreplay.
- Dagny wins the match, by the way.
- That night Francisco comes to visit Dagny at Rockdale and walks her home after work.
- On the way home, they stop in the woods, and Francisco grabs Dagny and kisses her.
- They have sex in the woods, and it's the start of a years-long affair.
- They continue their romance all summer but keep it a secret, since they know their families will disapprove. They're both very happy together.
- Dagny starts college in New York in the fall, and Francisco comes to visit her often. They don't know many details of each other's day-to-day lives though. (Dagny later learns that Francisco had been playing the stock market and bought a copper foundry outside Cleveland while he was still in college.)
- The affair continues after Francisco graduates from college, but they still keep it a secret, since they don't want other people disapproving or interfering.
- After his father's death, Francisco takes over D'Anconia Copper at age 23.

- He starts getting agitated and depressed, though, and tells Dagny there is something seriously wrong with the entire world.
- Dagny doesn't see Francisco for three years, but she isn't too bothered by this, since she knows they are working hard for a shared future and she trusts Francisco not to cheat on her.
- Three years later Francisco pops up abruptly and is unusually sentimental toward Dagny.
- He's acting weird, though. First he tells Dagny not to be surprised at what he might do in the future.
- Then he has a mini-freakout and begs her to help him "remain." Dagny doesn't understand what he means.
- Francisco tells Dagny that he can't say any more and asks her to let him do his own thing and not to wait for him.
- Dagny is very confused.
- Soon after this, she starts hearing about Francisco in the gossip papers. He's become a playboy and is having affairs and throwing wild parties and acting like a jerk.
- Dagny is heartbroken. She goes to confront him and he brushes her off.
- It takes Dagny years to get over Francisco. This all happened ten years ago, and she hasn't had a boyfriend since.
- Back to the present. Dagny is going to see Francisco, world's worst ex-boyfriend.
- When she gets to Francisco's hotel room, Dagny finds him playing marbles. (How appropriate, since he seems to have lost his. Ba-dum - we'll be here all week, folks!)
- Dagny greets Francisco warmly, then curses herself for doing so. (Francisco is apparently just too attractive to resist.)
- Dagny tries to find out what's up with the San Sebastián Mine thing, but Francisco won't give her a straight answer.
- Finally, she learns that he thinks it's all just a game and that the whole disaster is hilarious. He particularly likes watching James run around like a chicken with its head cut off.
- Dagny is upset and thinks back to their love affair. She

can't understand how Francisco turned into this irresponsible loser.

- She then asks him if Richard Halley wrote a fifth concerto, recalling how they both loved his music back in the day.
- Francisco has a mini-freakout. Perhaps he's part of the Richard Halley fan club, too, and thinks his membership will be revoked for not knowing this.
- He calms down when he sees that Dagny is just speculating. Then she asks him about the Mrs. Gilbert Vail scandal (see Chapter 4).
- Francisco says he never had an affair with her.
- Dagny can't figure out what's going on. Why let that lady say all that garbage in the gossip papers and not refute it?
- Francisco tries to steer the conversation back to Richard Halley, but Dagny isn't having it. She wants to know what's up with Francisco's wacky behavior.
- Francisco confesses that he acted like an irresponsible playboy instead of the super-industrialist that Mexico expected. So it was all a practical joke.
- Dagny is horrified that Francisco is deliberately acting this way and setting out to ruin people.
- She demands to know why, and Francisco arrogantly tells her that she's not ready to hear his reasons yet. The punk.
- Francisco leads Dagny out and cryptically tells her that she has lots of courage and will have enough of it someday. Dagny is confused. So are we.

Volume 1, Chapter 6

Characters Involved

Hank Rearden, Lillian Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, Dagny Taggart, Balph Eubank, Dr. Pritchett, Bertram Scudder, Philip Rearden

Summary

The Non-Commercial

- Hank Rearden is miserable. It's the night of his anniversary party, December 10, and Hank doesn't like parties.
- He would have forgotten about it entirely if his secretary hadn't reminded him to leave work and go get ready.
- We learn that Hank and Lillian have been married for eight years but lead largely separate lives. Lillian has her friends and society things to do, and Hank has his work.
- Hank is stressed out and is currently hiding upstairs in his bedroom.
- He thinks about all the work he has to do, and how the economy is getting worse and business is getting harder to do. Supplies and materials are harder to come by. He also thinks about how his family couldn't care less about his passion for business, and how rude they are to him.
- While getting dressed and moping, Hank finds a newspaper clipping in his pocket.
- It's an editorial about an Equalization of Opportunity Bill, which will pass soon. It forbids anyone from owning more than one business concern. This would be bad news for Hank, who owns lots of factories and does business in many areas.
- See, Hank is like a one-man corporate conglomerate. It's like how on *30 Rock*, Jack Donaghy works for GE, a

company that owns NBC (and Liz Lemon's show) as well as things like a microwave oven division. So this bill would force GE to choose between running NBC and having a microwave oven division. Which would be tragic.

- Hank refuses to believe that something so stupid will pass Congress. Oh, poor, naive Hank.
- Hank finally skulks downstairs and finds Lillian waiting. She's wearing her bracelet of Rearden Metal, which Hank feels like ripping off her.
- Hank starts circulating and overhears lots of conversations for our benefit. Thanks Hank.
- First up is Dr. Pritchett, head of the philosophy department at Patrick Henry University. Dr. Pritchett is telling people that nothing exists, there is no certainty, and that people are so stupid that a strong government must force them to be free. Yipes. Pritchett is clearly a radical.
- Next we meet an author named Balph Eubank. (We feel like that should be Ralph, but it's not.) Balph Eubank has written a new novel about how suffering and defeat are the essence of life.
- He then talks about applying the Equalization of Opportunity bill to literature by forcing people to read things other than popular bestsellers, whether they like it or not.
- We're guessing no one reads his books.
- Balph's new novel is called *The Heart Is a Milkman*. That gives *The Vulture Is Molting* (see Chapter 4) a run for its money! It's about frustration and suffering and is dedicated to Lillian Rearden.
- Lillian seems flattered by this.
- Elsewhere, a guy named Bertram Scudder is chilling at the bar. He edits a magazine and recently wrote a very mean editorial bashing Hank Rearden. Lillian is totally mean for inviting him.
- Bertram is talking with Betty Pope and Philip Rearden about the Equalization of Opportunity Bill. They all think it's super and that private property is evil.
- Another man named Claude Slagenhop wedges himself

into the conversation. These people have the best names ever.
- Claude is president of the Friends of Global Progress, the ineffectual charity that Philip works for.
- By this point Hank is hiding in a corner, staring out the window. (Probably a good strategy, since he must want to murder just about every guest at his party.)
- But then Dagny Taggart arrives. The plot thickens.
- Dagny is wearing a black dress with a cape and looks super dramatic. She's either going for a superhero or *Phantom of the Opera* look.
- James is with Dagny and goes to chat with Lillian. The two get along well, which probably doesn't bode well for the world.
- Dagny goes to chat with Hank and commiserates with his dislike of parties. Dagny wishes nice, cool people threw parties that were fun and interesting.
- Hank is unusually standoffish toward Dagny, which confuses her a bit.
- A random businessman who is pals with Hank and Dagny comes up and is surprised to see Dagny out of her office. They start chatting and Hank disappears.
- Dagny is a little disappointed that Hank didn't seem to notice her hot outfit.
- Balph Eubank is talking to James now, and they both complain about Hank and Dagny and how full of it the two of them are.
- Meanwhile, Hank clearly didn't strategize very well, because right after he slinks away from Dagny and the businessman, he's accosted by a reporter who tells Hank he should give a press conference. Apparently, Hank could do with a popularity boost and a public image makeover.
- Hank is rude to the guy, showing that an image makeover might be an uphill battle.
- Hank then confronts Lillian about why she invited Bertram Scudder after he published that super mean editorial about Hank. Lillian laughs him off.
- Just then Francisco d'Anconia arrives! Man, *everyone* is at this party.

- Lillian didn't actually invite Francisco, but she can't ask him to leave without causing a scene.
- Francisco starts making the rounds, mocking everyone and saying witty stuff that goes over people's heads.
- We learn that Francisco studied with the famous philosopher Hugh Akston at college.
- Guests are shocked to learn that Dr. Akston is still alive. Everyone thought he was an intellectual of another age entirely.
- James corners Francisco and demands to know what's up with the San Sebastián Mines.
- Francisco laughs him off and tells him that he's just practicing what the world is preaching, since he did things like not work for profit (which is selfish after all), and hiring a mining specialist who needed a job instead of one who was qualified.
- James has a hissy fit and storms off.
- Meanwhile, Lillian and Philip make fun of how puritanical Hank is - right in front of Hank. These two are awful. They act like really catty junior high mean girls.
- Francisco then comes up to talk to Hank.
- He says he wants to get to know Hank better and starts talking about what a great businessman Hank is. Hank is intrigued, since Francisco is expressing a lot of the thoughts and values about work that Hank has.
- Francisco challenges Hank: he asks him why he is so unhappy and why he doesn't tell these awful party guests to stuff it.
- Hank is confused, since he thought Francisco was just a worthless playboy.
- Francisco accepts this judgment and tells Hank he's found out what he needed to. Then he leaves.
- Oh that Francisco, always a mystery.
- Dagny makes her way back to Hank and asks why he invited a bunch of jerks to his party. She realizes that probably sounds insulting and tries to backpedal, saying she is mainly upset that Bertram Scudder is here and that she's like to deck him on Hank's behalf.
- Hank says uh-huh. The he claims he invited Bertram himself because...that's how he rolls or something.

- Dagny apologizes and tells Hank about her debut party back in the day and what a disappointment it was. Dagny feels like parties should be brilliant and fun, and she was really expecting her adult life to be different.
- Preaching to the choir, Dagny.
- Hank just sort of nods and Dagny gives up and leaves. But he watches her go. Detail!
- Dagny passes by a group of women talking about how worried they are about the state of the world.
- We learn that Europe has become communist; the people there are starving and it's a big wasteland.
- We also learn about a mercenary pirate named Ragnar Danneskjöld, who is terrorizing the high seas by destroying relief supplies bound for Europe.
- The women end their conversation by shrugging and asking everyone's favorite question: Who is John Galt? No, really, we'd seriously like to know at this point.
- Wait, here's someone to tell us. Some random lady comes up to Dagny and claims to know who John Galt is.
- The lady says that John Galt found the lost city of Atlantis. He sank his ship after finding out that he couldn't raise Atlantis from the bottom of the sea. He went down to live there instead.
- Fun fact! According to the Greek philosopher Plato, the first King of Atlantis was named Atlas. Cool connection there. This Atlas isn't the same as the Titan holding up the heavens, though (see "What's Up With the Title?"). This one is the mortal son of the sea god Poseidon. Anyway, back to the story.
- Dagny is like, whatever lady, and the lady gets all offended that Dagny doesn't believe her story.
- Francisco comes up and says that the story really is true. That makes Dagny mad. She gets even madder when Francisco starts flirting with her and tells her how hot she looks.
- Dagny storms off and overhears some guy named Mort Liddy carrying on about a song on the radio. Mort Liddy is a composer.
- It's Richard Halley's *Fourth Concerto*...kind of. It starts out that way, but then it turns into a remix.

- Dagny is horrified that someone would bastardize Halley's music this way.
- On her way out she hears Lillian mocking the Rearden Metal bracelet Hank gave her. Dagny snaps and walks over, offering her own diamond bracelet in exchange.
- Lillian can't believe Dagny is serious. Little does she know that Dagny is never not serious.
- Lillian trades with Dagny, though, and Hank comes up to stand by his wife's side, not looking at Dagny.
- Dagny apologizes to Hank on her way out and he dismisses her coldly.
- Much later Hank is on his way to bed. He stops by his wife's bedroom (they have separate rooms, apparently), and they have a stilted conversation about the party.
- Hank tries to figure out why Lillian married him in the first place.
- He was initially attracted by the fact that Lillian seemed so poised and hard-to-get. Hank likes a challenge.
- He quickly learned that Lillian is really just mean most of the time; she's not so much poised as rude and cold.
- Lillian seems to barely tolerate Hank and makes him feel guilty all the time.
- He asks Lillian to not invite his business friends to any more parties and then walks out of her room.

Volume 1, Chapter 7

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, James Taggart, Francisco d'Anconia, Dr. Stadler, Miss Ives, Mr. Ward, Mrs. Rearden

Summary

The Exploiters and the Exploited

- Dagny is in Colorado watching the progress on the railroad line.
- Rearden Metal is blue-green and the tracks look cool.
- Dagny's contractor is named Ben Nealy, and he thinks "muscles" is the answer to everything. Unfortunately, he's no McNamara.
- None of the engineers who work for Taggart Transcontinental are really down with using Rearden Metal, so Dagny had to hire Nealy to oversee everything.
- Dagny is actually having lots of trouble finding people willing to make the various parts she needs out of Rearden Metal. Apparently new means scary.
- Dagny is hardcore though, and is basically making people do what she needs them to do. We learn that she even bribed some people to get her access to a factory that had gone bankrupt so she could manufacture her own spikes for the rail line.
- Businesses are going bankrupt all over the place, which is causing lots of problems and delays.
- Hank is having to pick up a lot of the slack and make things for Dagny himself. And Dagny apparently goes around bribing people to get the job done.
- Ellis Wyatt pops up. He is cool with Dagny now since she's so hardcore, and he gives her some helpful advice about building in the mountains.

- Nealy calls Ellis stuck up once Ellis leaves, and Dagny tells him to shut up, Ellis is cool.
- Hank Rearden now pops up. (Colorado is a happenin' place.)
- Hank wanted to see how work was progressing and to look into buying some old factory.
- Dagny tells Hank that she wants a bridge made out of Rearden Metal but she can't afford it.
- Hank says *au contraire* and draws her a bridge that will be lots cheaper for her. Dagny makes a note to fire the idiot engineer who showed her the expensive one.
- Dagny is duly impressed by Hank's bridge-designing skills.
- Hank doesn't mention what happened at the party, and Dagny follows suit.
- They talk about how hard it is to find decent workers nowadays, and Hank shows Dagny the copper mine he plans on buying.
- Then they start talking about all the failing businesses and how the world seems to be slowing down to the point of stopping.
- Hank gives Dagny a pep talk, though.
- He shows off his nice new car, made by Hammond of Colorado. (Of course.)
- But Hank is flying home, not driving. He's having his car shipped to him. Dagny asks him to give her a lift in his private plane and he quickly says he's going to Minnesota, not New York. Dagny is like, whatever.
- But later Dagny finds out that Hank flew back to New York after all.
- Dagny wonders what Hank's problem is.
- Back in New York, Dagny is riding in a limo with James.
- James is complaining about the traffic and the road conditions and everything else in the world.
- The Taggarts are headed to a dinner at the New York Business Council. They've been invited to give a talk about Rearden Metal, since people are concerned that it's a threat to public safety.
- James is too, apparently, since some metal "experts" have claimed it's unsafe.
- Dagny says whatever, she knows more than metal experts

and she thinks that Rearden Metal is super cool.

- On the ride to dinner, Dagny sees a bunch of signs for businesses in Colorado and realizes that Colorado is basically supporting the whole country at this point. No pressure on your railroad there, Dagny!
- James then randomly bursts out that he hates Dan Conway, who refused to sell him the Phoenix-Durango track in Colorado.
- Dagny is furious that James asked in the first place, since he pretty much helped run Dan's business into the ground.
- James complains some more about how they're screwed, since people are probably going to boycott Rearden Metal and they won't get their line in Colorado finished in time at this rate. He wants Dagny to tell everyone how awesome Rearden Metal is at the dinner tonight to get everyone to lay off.
- But it gets better! Turns out Dagny is going to debate the issue live over the radio with none other than Bertram Scudder, the angry journalist who attacked Hank Rearden.
- Dagny basically says heck to the no, and gets out of the car.
- James yells at her to come back.
- Dagny wanders around and finds herself in a bad neighborhood. She stops at a small diner. Good call, Dagny, pie makes everything better.
- Actually Dagny just orders coffee.
- The people at the diner counter all look depressed.
- Some man starts telling Dagny how they're all doomed.
- Another guy tells her to ignore the first man, who's being a total Debbie Downer.
- Somebody of course asks who John Galt is, and another guy pipes up that he knows. This had better be better than that stupid Atlantis story.
- OK, so this guy says John Galt is the guy who (are you ready?) found the fountain of youth. Yeah.
- So John Galt found a fountain of youth on top of a mountain but found out that it couldn't be brought back down, so he stayed up there with the fountain.
- Scene break! A man named Dr. Potter (no relation to Harry) is talking with Hank.

- Dr. Potter works for the State Science Institute.
- He says the Institute is going to release a statement about Rearden Metal. He blackmails Hank and says that the Institute will take a stand against Rearden Metal unless Hank sells them the rights to his metal.
- Hank says no way. Dr. Potter says he's making a big mistake, and Hank tells him to go away.
- Dagny, meanwhile, is also having troubles.
- Mr. Mowen, the guy who manufactures switches and signals for the railway, is refusing to make anything else out of Rearden Metal, since it's so unpopular it would be social suicide.
- Later Eddie brings Dagny the super vague statement released by the State Science Institute that hints about how Rearden Metal is going to kill everyone or something. Also, that Rearden Metal is of the devil.
- Dagny and Eddie are mad.
- But Dagny tells Eddie to chill, because it will all be OK.
- We cut to the State Science Institute, where we meet Dr. Robert Stadler, the head guy there.
- Dr. Stadler is a genius physicist who used to teach at (where else?) Patrick Henry University.
- He also founded the State Science Institute to promote all things scientific.
- Dagny is paying him a visit.
- Dr. Stadler is in his early fifties now and he's happy to see Dagny - apparently he's heard lots about her.
- Dagny questions him about the Rearden Metal statement but Stadler is clueless about it. He says he doesn't have time to pay attention to things like that, since he's busy thinking big important thoughts all day. Apparently Dr. Ferris released the statement.
- Dagny is appalled. Stadler has bad management skills.
- Stadler admits that he doesn't know of anything wrong with Rearden Metal per se, but there are other things to consider besides the truth, and he won't do anything to retract the statement.
- It's all politics, apparently: Congress votes on the Institute's budget, and they don't like Rearden Metal, so there you go.

- Stadler then goes on a rant about how society is awful and everyone is an idiot.
- Dagny is like, stop being a crotchety old man and help me out!
- But it's no go. Stadler won't do anything to help. But he will tell her a story.
- The story is about how Stadler became disillusioned many years ago. Once upon a time he had three students at Patrick Henry University who were brilliant. They double-majored in physics and philosophy, studying with him and Hugh Akston. But one of his students, his favorite, damned him for starting the Institute and broke off contact with him.
- It turns out his brilliant students all went bad. One was Ragnar Danneskjöld, who became a pirate. One was (wait for it) Francisco d'Anconia, who we already know. And the other doesn't even get named because he disappeared. The end.
- New scene! James Taggart is once again pitching a fit.
- He's hiding out at the Taggart estate claiming that he's sick. He's been there since the Institute's statement came out about Rearden Metal. James apparently doesn't believe in facing your problems so much as he does in lying, running away, pretending said problems don't exist, then crying about it to his younger sister.
- James is all doom and gloom, but Dagny of course has a super smart solution. She's going to resign as VP and start up her own railroad company, so she can use all the Rearden Metal she wants and not have to worry about James and the Board of Directors being lame and throwing a fit. Eddie will be the temporary VP of Taggart Transcontinental, but really Dagny will keep running things from behind the scenes.
- She says once the line is up and running she'll give the line back to Taggart Transcontinental.
- James agrees to all this once Dagny assures him that if she fails, she'll go down all by herself and won't take him with her. Way to be supportive and helpful, James.
- The Taggarts then discuss what to call Dagny's new railroad. James nixes the Dagny Taggart Line, since he

doesn't want the name Taggart associated with her potential train wreck (pun intended).

- Dagny decides to call it the John Galt Line, proving she has a rather twisted sense of humor. She says it's her way of telling all those defeatist and depressed people to shove it.
- Dagny leaves James with a parting request: to keep the board of directors and the Washington people away from her, or she may become homicidal.
- Scene cut. Dagny is having a meeting with Francisco, of all people, in her office at the Taggart building, which is about to become Eddie's office.
- Francisco seems like he'd rather be anywhere else then confirms it by asking Dagny to let him leave.
- Dagny says no way, then proceeds to ask him for a loan to help her finish the Rio Norte Line. Since Dagny is having to build it as part of a brand new company, she no longer has Taggart funds or investors to draw upon.
- Dagny bluntly explains her predicament and pleads with Francisco for help. He says no, of course, but he seems upset.
- Dagny then says that she asked him even though she knew he'd refuse, because she thought he'd understand her quest to save Colorado. She hoped something from their shared past might still mean something to him. She says she can't understand him anymore.
- Francisco gives her a hint: contradictions don't exist.
- (Hey, Francisco, your hint wasn't helpful.)
- Dagny pleads with him some more, talking about their past and asking if he wants her to get down on her knees and beg.
- Francisco finally snaps, kisses her hand, and calls her "my love."
- But then he goes back to being his obnoxious, sarcastic self.
- Dagny is hurt but fires back by saying that she sees that he is on the side of people like Orren Boyle and Robert Stadler. (Bad people, in other words.)
- Francisco says she might have to eat her words someday, and she says whatever.

- Then Dagny tells him the name of her new railroad. Francisco loses it for a moment, which is kind of hilarious.
- Dagny says John Galt stands for the impossible and unattainable, and she wants her railroad to prove all the haters wrong.
- Francisco starts cracking up and tells her if that she names a railroad line after John Galt, he'll come claim it.
- We doubt John Galt will be coming to claim anything, though, since, according to the legends we've heard so far (Atlantis and the Fountain of Youth), he is an eternally young mermaid. Getting around Colorado could prove difficult.
- Scene cut! Dagny is in Hank Rearden's office. It's nighttime.
- Dagny tells Hank the John Galt Line is ready to go. All the cool industrial dudes in Colorado (like Ellis Wyatt) have invested in the company. Other investors include a Ted Nielsen, a Lawrence Hammond, an Andrew Stockton, and a Ken Danagger, who owns a coal company in Pennsylvania. Hank offers to invest some money, too, which is pretty cool.
- Dagny tries to talk him out of it, but Hank won't hear of it and says he doesn't see it as a gamble, since the John Galt Line will be awesome.
- He then shows her a bunch of telegrams from the Colorado investors placing orders for Rearden Metal.
- They talk about the Colorado guys and their plans for the John Galt Line.
- Dagny tells Hank to contact Eddie if he needs anything, since she's going back to Colorado to oversee the construction.
- Hank expresses concern about Dagny living by herself in a train car at a construction site. She laughs him off, saying that's the first time he's thought of her as a woman.
- We get an internal monologue from Hank now. Turns out Hank is well aware that Dagny is a woman, and he's totally had the hots for her for years.
- Hank feels guilty about his intense attraction to Dagny, since he is married. He also thinks Dagny is pure and doesn't want to disrespect or dishonor her by having sex

with her.

- They get back to business and Dagny think that Hank looks really severe and emotionless working away at his desk. Ah, the irony.
- Scene break again!
- The next day, Hank is hard at work, in crisis mode. He's just lost a huge shipment of copper and is trying to recover it quickly.
- His secretary Gwen Ives comes in. She is super efficient and cool as a cucumber. They work for a while until Hank's mother shows up to see him.
- There's an emergency: Philip is unhappy.
- Hank couldn't care less.
- Mama Rearden asks Hank to give Philip a job, since he's annoying her at home or something.
- Hank refuses and they have a long debate about family versus business. Mama Rearden thinks blood is thicker than steel...or something. Hank says he's running a business and doesn't believe in nepotism (hiring relatives just because they are relatives). He also points out that Philip is a grownup and can find a job for himself.
- Mama Rearden storms out and a man named Mr. Ward comes in asking for some steel.
- Mr. Ward owns a small company that makes farm equipment, which has fallen on hard times. Orren Boyle screwed him over with a steel shipment, and Mr. Ward has come to beg Hank to help him out.
- Hank is about to let Mr. Ward down gently, since he really can't spare any steel right now, but just then Miss Ives bursts in.
- The Equalization of Opportunity Bill has passed. Doom! So now Hank can't have more than one business, which really stinks.
- Mr. Ward freaks, but Hank tells him to chill out and that he will get Mr. Ward some steel.
- Hank pulls himself together and offers up some words of support to his distraught secretary.
- That night, Hank has a bit of a crisis in his office. He's not sure how he'll manage now, how they'll be able to finish the John Galt Line if he's handicapped like this.

- But then Hank has a bright idea. He realizes that he has an even better bridge design for Dagny.
- He calls her up excitedly and tells her not to worry about the Equalization of Opportunity Bill - Team Hank and Dagny will save the day.

Volume 1, Chapter 8

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Eddie Willers, Paul Larkin, Ken Danagger, Ellis Wyatt, Pat Logan

Summary

The John Galt Line

- Eddie is back in the Taggart building cafeteria talking to his Mysterious Worker friend. Once again we only get Eddie's side of the conversation.
- Yet again, Eddie spills the beans about everything to Mystery Worker.
- He fills him in on the John Galt Line business and how they're coming along OK.
- Someone named Dwight Sanders is helping them out, too, with diesel engines for their trains.
- But Eddie is having problems being the VP, cause he feels it's dishonest. He's getting credit for work that Dagny is actually doing herself.
- But he says that Dagny is cool with it all, which makes him feel better.
- Mystery Worker apparently asks why Dagny decided to name her railroad the John Galt Line. Eddie doesn't like the name, but Mystery Worker does, which confuses Eddie.
- Scene break. Dagny is working in a small, junky building across the street from the Taggart building. It's the John Galt Line headquarters.
- It's late at night, and Dagny is tired and thinking Deep Thoughts about her life and how it's not what she'd pictured for herself.
- She thinks about how she must have a soul mate out there

somewhere.
- Then she sees a mysterious shadow outside her office. It's a man, pacing and looking upset.
- Dagny wonders what this guy is up to and waits to see what he'll do.
- Shadow Guy finally walks off, and Dagny goes outside to see where he went, but he's gone.
- All she sees is an open door across the street leading to the underground tunnels of the Taggart station. A clue.
- Scene cut. Hank is meeting with Paul Larkin.
- He's selling Paul his ore mines, since he is no longer allowed to own them.
- Paul assures Hank that he'll still consider the ore mines Hank's and won't screw him over or anything.
- Hank is having none of it - he's ticked off about the whole thing.
- He tells Paul he doesn't want useless promises and wants Paul to conduct this like an actual business transaction.
- Paul is confused by this.
- Hank wants Paul to admit that he could double-cross Hank if he wants to and to acknowledge the situation for what it is.
- Paul is still confused and thinks Hank is being rude.
- Hank is peeved that Paul is acting like he's the victim in all of this. Granted, Hank just had his business practically stolen, but he was mean to Paul.
- We get a contrast scene now. Hank has sold his coal mines to Ken Danagger, a cool guy in Pennsylvania. Ken is another one of the investors in the John Galt Line.
- Ken promises Hank he'll give him a fair and square deal on his coal but that he won't just give it to him for free. Hank is glad to hear it, cause he's down with fairness.
- Later Hank goes to New York and has a meeting with Eddie at the Wayne-Falkland Hotel.
- Hank meets Eddie in his bathrobe over breakfast, revealing that he's pretty comfortable with him.
- Hank asks Eddie how things are at Taggart Transcontinental and Eddie says not good.
- They are short on funds and worried about having enough to pay everyone their salaries.

- Hank agrees to give Eddie an extension for the Rearden Metal he's already shipped them.
- Eddie is stunned and grateful.
- Hank says he's just making a smart business decision - if Taggart Transcontinental goes bankrupt, he'll lose a big customer. He says they can pay him after the John Galt Line opens and they start making money again.
- Eddie thanks Hank but says that he hates that James Taggart is going to benefit from this deal, too.
- Hank tells Eddie to just ignore James cause he doesn't matter.
- Scene cut! We get a rundown of public opinion and press coverage of the John Galt Line.
- Everyone is predicting that the bridge in Colorado made of Rearden Metal will collapse.
- People are also complaining about the Taggarts, calling them vultures. They say the Taggarts don't care about public safety and just want to make a profit.
- We get some quotes from wannabe philanthropist Claude Slagenhop, TV journalist/steel mogul Orren Boyle, and angry blogger (er, journalist) Bertram Scudder about how Rearden Metal is going to kill everyone and how no one in their right mind would ride on the John Galt Line, since it's a death trap.
- Someone took a random poll and no one said they would ride on the John Galt Line.
- No one would publicly defend Rearden Metal, and people were buying Taggart stock before the line launched under aliases.
- James publicly supports his sister, in front of the Board of Directors at least, but also continues to make rude comments about her.
- Philip is excited by the prospect that Hank will fail for once.
- Lillian tells Hank that there are rumors going around that he's having an affair with Dagny, which she laughs off. She says Dagny is practically "sexless" and that Hank is too much of a Puritan to have an affair.
- James whines to Dagny about how unpopular the Taggarts are, but Dagny just laughs about it. Screw public

opinion, she says.

- The only people excited about the John Galt Line are the very young and the very old - in other words, people who aren't cynical.
- The Line will open on July 22 and the first train will be a freight special -not a passenger train, but one hauling materials and cargo.
- The Union of Locomotive Engineers doesn't want any union members to work on it, since they'll most likely die a horrible death.
- Dagny says that if it will make him feel better, she'll draw up a contract saying that no union member can ever be employed on the John Galt Line. The guy quickly backpedals.
- Dagny then says she'll ask for volunteers to work on the first train so that she won't be ordering anyone to certain doom and death.
- We learn that Eddie's first name is Edwin.
- Edwin sends out a memo asking for volunteers among Taggart employees who are willing to work on the train.
- He then calls Dagny and is super excited.
- Dagny goes over to the Taggart building and finds that every single Taggart Transcontinental engineer has volunteered to work on the first John Galt train. As many as could come are there in person to see Dagny.
- Dagny is overwhelmed. One engineer yells, "to hell with James Taggart," and everyone starts cheering and clapping.
- Dagny holds a lottery, and a man named Pat Logan wins. He's an engineer at their Nebraska Division and he's been with the company for a long time.
- Dagny says she'll be riding in the cab of the engine on the first run, and the engineers say hooray.
- Scene break! Dagny calls Hank and tells him that she wants to have a press conference.
- Hank finds this hilarious.
- A bunch of reporters crowd into Dagny's John Galt Line office.
- Hank is there too, lounging on a chair.
- Dagny reads of a list of statistics and technological facts

about the John Galt Line and Rearden Metal. She then gives the reporters the Line's financial prospects. The end.
- The reporters are confused and ask if she wants to send a message to the public.
- Dagny says she just did.
- Another reporter asks if she has anything to say about the allegations that the Line isn't safe.
- Dagny says if people think that they shouldn't ride it.
- Another reporter asks what was her motive for building the John Galt Line.
- Dagny says she wanted to make money.
- The reporters can't believe her bluntness and keep questioning her about her real meaning.
- They then ask if she's sure she wants them to quote all of this. Dagny tells them to say that "Miss Taggart hopes to make a ton of money on the John Galt Line, end quote."
- No reporters have any questions.
- Dagny then tells them the details of the Line's opening day. She says the train will run a hundred miles per hour, which shocks the reporters.
- They ask who in their right mind would conduct a train like that, and Dagny says she had to turn people away, actually, so there.
- She then sarcastically tells the reporters to be sure to attend the grand opening, since the collapse of the bridge will be newsworthy and exciting.
- Hank then butts in and says he'll be riding in the engine cab along with Dagny, and they share a Meaningful Look. Excitement.
- Now it's July 22, opening day of the John Galt Line.
- Dagny is elated. She's thrilled that her hard work has paid off and super excited about the first train ride to Wyatt Junction, Colorado.
- Ellis apparently named a town after himself.
- Eddie is there too, and he's practically overwhelmed by Dagny's awesomeness.
- The train crew, Hank, and Dagny are all standing around for a photo op, looking goofily excited.
- The reporters ask if they can try to look like they are going to their certain deaths, and everyone laughs.

- As they all get on board, a reporter yells out to ask if Dagny can answer the who-is-John-Galt question.
- Dagny tells them "we," meaning the train crew, are John Galt.
- Eddie gets ready to cut the ceremonial ribbon in front of the train with a giant pair of scissors.
- But then Eddie says he doesn't want the launch to be phony, so he tells Pat to start the engine, cuts the ribbon quickly, then leaps out of the way.
- The train speeds by, and Dagny waves to Eddie from the window.
- Train ride time! Lots of pretty descriptions of Colorado going by riding really, really fast.
- Dagny is having a major life moment here. She is super happy.
- Dagny is watching Hank and realizes that she has a huge crush on him and that she's liked him for a long time but just didn't realize it.
- She's caught up in these thoughts when she notices all the people standing along the track to watch the train go by. She realizes that they are all wearing railroad caps. They are retired Taggart employees or the sons of employees who have come out to guard the train and to watch it pass.
- Dagny is overwhelmed and starts laughing happily.
- As they pass through stations, they see people waiting for them, waving and tossing flowers.
- Dagny feels like she's living history.
- Hank and Dagny gaze at each other.
- Then they get further up in the mountains and the ride becomes very exciting and dangerous.
- They cross the bridge with no problems.
- They are heading west into the setting sun.
- Dagny thinks about how great it is to be alive.
- They finally pull into Wyatt Junction and Dagny hears Halley's *Fifth Concerto* in her mind.
- Everyone in town has come to the station and people are cheering.
- Dagny starts to climb down the ladder when someone yanks her off and whirls her around in the air. It's Ellis

Wyatt.

- Turns out the Colorado industrial crowd has come to see the train.
- Dagny shakes hands with all the train's crew as flashbulbs go off.
- Ellis leads her and Hank off and tells them that they are staying with him at his house tonight.
- There's a party in town, but Ellis says he thought Dagny would like a quieter dinner instead, and she agrees.
- At Casa Ellis the three have dinner and make excited plans for the future.
- Ellis realizes he never actually introduced himself to Hank before kidnapping him and whisking him off to dinner, which is funny.
- Ellis tells Hank he should move to Colorado, where all the cool kids are.
- They continue talking late into the night.
- Ellis has a bit of a moment and says they should enjoy it all while it lasts. But he shakes it off and tells Dagny not to worry.
- He shows Hank and Dagny to the guest rooms and then heads off to bed.
- Hank and Dagny have another Moment and then they have sex.

Volume 1, Chapter 9

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Mr. Mowen, Owen Kellogg, James Taggart, Cherryl Brooks

Summary

The Sacred and the Profane

- Time for some morning-after awkwardness.
- Hank and Dagny are awake and staring at each other.
- Hank brushes back some of Dagny's hair and seems like he's feeling tormented.
- He gets up to get dressed and then decides it's time to speechify.
- Hank proceeds to tell Dagny that he feels guilty, that what they did last night was depraved, that he used to admire her but now he sees that she's not so pure, and that he is ashamed of himself for sleeping with her.
- Dagny goes from confused to amused in about ten seconds flat, which is amazing.
- She then starts laughing.
- Dagny gets up, naked, and makes her own speech. She tells Hank that he needs to chill out.
- She says she wants to have lots of sex with him and that she's fine having an affair with him. (She has practice at the clandestine thing after all.) She doesn't see any problem because they are consenting adults who are attracted to each other.
- Then they go at it again, so we're guessing Hank's reservations have flown out the window.
- Scene cut! James is wandering around New York in the rain.
- He just left a Board Meeting at Taggart Transcontinental,

where everyone gave him credit for getting the John Galt Line up and running. Super lame.
- James is feeling emo and depressed as usual.
- He hears some news about Ragnar and his pirate antics that upsets him.
- He stops at a drugstore for some Kleenex.
- The girl at the counter recognizes him and is all excited to meet him, like he's a movie star or something.
- The girl questions James excitedly about the John Galt Line and asks him how he deals with being so awesome.
- She seems to have him confused with his sister.
- James is confused and amused by the kid.
- She tells James that she admires him and wants to be a successful, cool person when she gets older.
- James likes being flattered, so he invites her to his place for drinks.
- She acts like this is the most incredible thing ever.
- At James's place he grills her about her background.
- We find out that she is Cherryl Brooks, age nineteen, from Buffalo, New York. Her family was poor and she ran away from home to make it on her own in the big city.
- James then starts whining to her (he really just can't help himself) about how mistreated he is, how nothing is his fault, etc. He also throws out some communist dogma for good measure and says some stuff about how no one has ideas and nothing really exists.
- Cherryl finds this all confusing.
- James then complains about the people he works with and laughs about how the success with the John Galt Line threw everyone for a loop. Dr. Ferris apparently changed gears quickly and started going on about how Rearden Metal is a national treasure, but Bertram Scudder still had nothing good to say.
- James then starts griping about how much he hates Dagny and tries to convert Cherryl to his communist ways.
- Cherryl is confused but manages to rationalize all this to herself, thinking that James is just being modest about his achievements and that he's sad because people are so jealous of how cool he is.
- James thinks this is hilarious.

- He then takes Cherryl home and she thanks him for not putting the moves on her. James then deliberately embarrasses her by acting like he doesn't know what she's talking about. She runs away, blushing.
- Scene cut! We are back in New York with Hank and Dagny.
- They are at Dagny's apartment.
- Hank decides to go off on his "Dagny is impure" kick again.
- He tells her all the reporters think she's cool and respect her but he knows the truth.
- Dagny finds this amusing and they have sex again.
- Later, still in bed together, Hank asks Dagny about her past lovers.
- Dagny tells him about Francisco without naming names.
- Hank demands a name, but she refuses. Dagny seems to enjoy the fact that this bothers Hank.
- They have sex yet again.
- Scene cut! We go to Connecticut to visit a Mr. Mowen of the Amalgamated Switch and Signal Company. We're really not quite sure what he manufactures, but it's presumably something to do with railroads. He is standing sadly outside.
- His neighbor factory, the Quinn Ball Bearing Company, is moving to Colorado.
- Mr. Mowen is mad that everyone is going to Colorado and thinks that people should stay put so nothing has to change, ever.
- Mr. Mowen starts chatting with a young guy who is helping to load stuff up at the Quinn factory.
- Mr. Quinn is moving because of the Equalization of Opportunity Bill. He wanted to open a second factory branch in Colorado, but since that's no longer allowed he's just moving out there.
- Mr. Mowen then goes on a contradictory rant about how change is bad and Colorado is awful. He complains about people like Hank who have a monopoly but then also complains about newcomers to the Switch and Signal business since he has seniority..
- The young guy makes snobby comments and also praises

Hank Rearden.

- We learn that his name is Owen Kellogg. It's the guy who quit Taggart Transcontinental in Chapter 1!
- Mr. Mowen gripes some more but then says the new head of the Economic Planning Bureau should fix everything: his name is Wesley Mouch. Doom!
- Quick Historical Context Lesson: Economic Plans are a signal of communist shenanigans. Communist countries like the Soviet Union always had "X-Year Plans" where they would do things like tell factories exactly how much they had to produce. These plans were usually big disasters.
- Scene cut. Dagny is hanging out at home, thinking deep thoughts, as usual, about the world and life and business.
- Hank comes in - he has his own key now.
- He was at a banquet for the National Council of Metal Industries. Sounds thrilling.
- Hank and Dagny flirt.
- Hank complains about the banquet, saying that the people there were all awful and seem to have no values at all. They all seemed to want something from him and acted like leeches.
- Dagny confesses that she needs Hank, too, but he assures her that she doesn't sound like a leech. Hank sure knows how to give a girl a compliment.
- They then discuss future business plans, and Hank says they'll overturn the Equalization of Opportunity Bill soon cause it's so stupid.
- They then decide to take a vacation together.
- They make out and flirt some more.
- Hank tells Dagny he wants her to wear his Rearden Metal bracelet and she agrees.
- Guess what they do next?
- Scene cut! Hank and Dagny are cruising through Wisconsin, that vacation hotspot.
- They are both depressed by how rundown everything looks. Economic hard times are everywhere.
- Hank and Dagny are using their vacation to visit old factories. Seriously.
- Hank wanted to drive to an ore mine that he was thinking

of buying, though he'll have to wait till the Bill is repealed.
- During the day they talk about business - Hank never wants to discuss their relationship, and he still seems somewhat ashamed about all the sex they are having.
- They drive around the Midwest for days.
- Dagny sees a coal-burning train and has a freakout. Hank asks what's the matter with her.
- She's worried about the economy crashing and how it's so hard to find equipment. She's also worried that Ted Nielsen won't be able to manufacture the engines she needs for her trains in this economy.
- Dagny asks Hank if they can visit another old factory on their Tour of the Industrial Graveyards of America.
- Hank says sure.
- It's the Twentieth Century Motor Company, in Wisconsin, which shut down years ago. Dagny wants to see if there's any equipment left there that Ted Nielsen could use.
- They arrive at a rundown old factory town that's kind of creepy.
- They ask for directions to the factory but no one can help them out.
- The people in the town are all really apathetic and super poor.
- Some punky kids smash out a window in Hank's car.
- Dagny sees an old woman who looks overweight, but she turns out to be pregnant. Dagny asks her how old she is and the woman says 37.
- Dagny is freaked out because she's 35. She can't imagine living in this kind of crushing poverty.
- They finally get to the factory, which has been thoroughly looted.
- But then Dagny finds an old motor in a pile of junk.
- It's some sort of miracle motor that uses static electricity, and Dagny is shocked at this awesome discovery.
- Hank and Dagny agree that this motor could change the world, but Hank thinks that the person who invented it is likely dead, since it's been abandoned here.
- But Dagny wants to try to find the inventor, since it's an incredible scientific discovery. Hank agrees to help her.

It's a new quest!

Volume 1, Chapter 10

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Paul Larkin, Lillian Rearden, Mayor Bascom, Eugene Lawson, Lee Hunsacker, Midas Mulligan, Judge Narragansett, The Starnes Kids, Ellis Wyatt, Hugh Akston, Mrs. William Hastings

Summary

Wyatt's Torch

- The hunt for the inventor of the motor begins.
- Hank and Dagny go to the Hall of Records to find out who owns the factory now.
- Turns out no one: it was sold to two owners, and there's been a lengthy court battle going on over it.
- The last legal owner was a Mark Yonts of the People's Mortgage Company, which is now bankrupt. Yonts sold the factory to some people in South Dakota while also using it as collateral on a loan from a bank in Illinois - hence the current legal dispute.
- Financial FYI: When you get a loan from a bank, you generally have to offer up something like property to back it up, as collateral. (Or, if you are Nat Taggart, your wife - see Chapter 3!) Collateral means that if you don't pay back your loan, the bank can seize your property. So this is why the bank has a claim to the Twentieth Century Motor Company.
- We learn that the poor, creepy town Hank and Dagny visited is called Starnesville.
- The Hall of Records guy doesn't have much info, but he does tell them that Yonts bought the factory from Mayor Bascom of Rome, Wisconsin.
- Scene cut! We're now at Mayor Bascom's office.

- He tells Dagny she's wasting her time trying to find anyone who worked at the factory.
- Dagny looks out the window and thinks that Rome is only a few steps away from reaching Strarnesville levels of poverty.
- The mayor rambles on about crooked business deals and how people have to make money somehow, winking at Hank and Dagny all the while.
- Finally he gives them some decent info: Jed Starnes used to run the factory, and all the trouble started up after he died. The Mayor got the factory in a bankruptcy sale.
- It was the bankruptcy sale of Community National Bank in Madison, run by one Eugene Lawson. Eugene didn't actually own the factory, but he'd put lots of money into it. It isn't specified, but we're assuming that the Community National Bank has the factory as collateral on a loan, which is how the factory ended up in a bankruptcy sale.
- A corporation named Amalgamated Service Inc. owned it before the Mayor.
- Eugene Lawson currently works for the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources in Washington.
- The mayor then gives some unsolicited advice: he tells Dagny to get a wedding ring if she and Hank are going to run around having an affair. He says he could tell they weren't married from all their crazy sexual tension, which married couples don't have.
- Hank is furious and is about to challenge the mayor to a duel or something, but Dagny drags him out.
- She tries to calm him down, but he's not having it.
- They decide to head back to New York, and Dagny says she'll get some people to move the Magical Motor to Taggart Transcontinental for safe keeping.
- She calls Eddie to tell him about the motor, but Eddie doesn't have time for that: the kitty litter has hit the fan and Dagny has to get home pronto. Eddie thinks Congress is planning to pass some new laws that will kill Colorado. Doom!
- New scene. Dagny is hiding the motor in an underground

vault at Taggart Transcontinental.

- Next we get a rundown of doom.
- All sorts of groups are demanding that restrictions be placed on the John Galt Line and on Colorado. The Locomotive Engineers Union wants to restrict the speed of trains on the John Galt Line for safety reasons. States bordering Colorado demand that Colorado not hog all the train traffic. Mr. Mowen wants a guarantee that everyone can have an equal share of Rearden Metal. Orren Boyle wants to limit the amount of Rearden Metal Hank can produce. Wesley Mouch is demanding emergency powers for the Economic Bureau. Talk about doom.
- Dagny demands that James use his Washington connections to put a stop to this. James acts like he doesn't know what she's talking about.
- They debate the issues and Dagny walks out frustrated, since talking to James is like talking to a brick wall.
- Dagny is stressed and can't figure out what to do.
- She heads off to Washington for a meeting with Eugene Lawson.
- Meanwhile, all these restrictions on Rearden Metal are giving Hank big problems too.
- He's meeting with Paul Larkin, who screwed up and missed a shipment of ore to Hank.
- Paul insists that it wasn't his fault, since he totally intended to do it.
- Hank is like, I can't use your intentions idiot.
- Hank learns that Larkin is badly mismanaging things and throws him out of his office.
- Hank has to start doing lots of shady backroom deals in order to get the materials and money he needs for his factory.
- The one bright spot in Hank's life is Dagny, but even that is ruined somewhat by all his guilt.
- Hank sneaks home and tries to avoid Lillian, but she comes into his room.
- Lillian takes her usual approach of mocking Hank.
- She gripes about what a lousy husband Hank is and laughs at him.
- Hank stresses and tries to figure out what her deal is and

why she married him. He can't tell if she loves him or not, but he decides he's the guilty one, so he has to let her get away with whatever she wants.

- She tries to put the moves on him and he shoves her away.
- She's shocked but recovers quickly and goes back to mocking him.
- Hank finally asks why she makes cracks about him all the time. She has no answer.
- Finally she leaves, and Hank wishes he were in New York with Dagny.
- Scene cut! Dagny is meeting with Eugene Lawson in D.C.
- Eugene, apropos of nothing, says he doesn't feel guilty about how things went down, literally, with his bank at all.
- Dagny says she didn't say anything about guilt.
- He says again that he doesn't feel guilty.
- Dagny is like, whatever, tell me about Twentieth Century Motors.
- Eugene carries on about how he's a philanthropist and believes in "need not greed."
- He won't answer any of Dagny's questions directly. He tells her he knew everyone who worked in the factory and was BFF to all.
- But of course now he can't remember anyone's name.
- He then asks Dagny if she wants to ask him anything about her railroad, but Dagny shuts him down.
- Eugene loses it a bit and yells about how the bank collapse wasn't his fault, since rich people were out to get him. Er, sure buddy.
- Finally he gives her some useful info: the head of the Amalgamated Service Inc. was a Lee Hunsacker, who now lives in Oregon.
- Eugene gets mad and tells her she has no right to hate him.
- Dagny has nothing to say to that.
- He rants some more about how he's a nice guy with good motives and has never made a profit in his life.
- Dagny tells him that is a despicable statement and leaves. Good day, sir.

- New scene. Dagny is now meeting with Lee Hunsacker, who is also whiny.
- Lee is convinced that everyone is out to get him.
- He's currently writing his memoirs.
- In the midst of his ranting we learn that Jed Starnes's children took over his factory after his death and ran it into the ground. Lee took over after them and thought it was a great opportunity, but he needed a huge loan.
- Some banker named Midas Mulligan refused him a loan.
- Dagny recalls that Midas Mulligan was a famous banker who was hardcore back in the day. His name was Michael but he changed it to Midas, which had been a rude nickname people had for him.
- Fun fact: In Greek mythology, Midas was a man who made a wish that he could turn anything he touched to gold. He got his wish but quickly cursed it when he found that his food and drink were turning into gold as well. So he asked for help and eventually had to bathe in a river in order to lose his Midas touch.
- Midas Mulligan seems to embrace the name, however.
- He vanished without a trace seven years ago. (Seems to be a trend in this book.)
- Mulligan planned it all in advance, though, and every depositor in the bank got their money back down to the last penny.
- Mulligan's disappearance had always freaked Dagny out, since it was so bizarre.
- Lee breaks back into Dagny's thoughts and tells her that he sued Mulligan for refusing him a loan.
- Dagny is appalled.
- But it gets better: some judge named Narragansett ruled against Lee and in favor of Midas. But then a court of appeals overturned the verdict and was going to force Mulligan to give Lee a loan. But Mulligan disappeared before he could be forced to do so, and Lee didn't get any money.
- Well, that solves part of that mystery. Turns out the Judge retired six months after that case, right around the time Mulligan vanished.
- This is where Eugene Lawson enters the story with a huge

loan to Lee.
- Finally Lee decides he should probably ask who he's talking to. He and Eddie Willers would get along super!
- Dagny fills him in and he starts ranting about industrialists and how they're all awful.
- He has no other useful info for Dagny. He offers to show her his factory records, but they turn out to be a bunch of newspaper clippings about himself.
- He does tell her where she can find the Starnes heirs though: Louisiana. It's a cross-country chase!
- Dagny heads to Louisiana and talks to the chief of police in Durance.
- He warns Dagny away from the Starnes kids, saying they are all bad seeds.
- Eric Starnes, the youngest, committed suicide four years ago. He was chasing after a sixteen-year-old who said ew, since he was over forty. Then later on her wedding day, to a nice age-appropriate man, Eric killed himself in her bedroom so that the couple would find him when they got home from the ceremony.
- Gerald Starnes is in the poor house and is super bitter. He rants about how he tried to do good at the factory and how it all went wrong, but it wasn't his fault.
- Dagny leaves, disgusted.
- Next up is Ivy Starnes, who lives in a small house decorated with lots of Buddhas.
- Ivy also rants about how she and her siblings were humanitarians and turned the factory into a communist paradise. They stopped paying salaries and instead rewarded people based on their need, which was determined at mass meetings that everyone attended.
- Dagny is about to lose it and Ivy can't figure out what her problem is.
- Ivy does remember who ran the laboratory, though: William Hastings.
- We're off again, this time to Brandon, Wyoming.
- Turns out William Hastings is dead. Dagny talks with his widow.
- She says he worked at the factory before the Starnes kids took over, but she doesn't recall any of the people he

worked with.
- She says her husband quit soon after the Starnes kids took over and seemed really upset about something for a year afterwards. Then he chilled out and quit his new job in Wyoming.
- She said they had a very quiet life after that and lived off their savings.
- She recalls that he had a young engineering apprentice who was apparently brilliant, but she can't remember his name.
- But she does tell Dagny a weird story: a few years ago she went to pick up her husband at a restaurant and she saw him talking with a young man and an older one. He got in the car and told her that the young guy was the awesome engineer he had told her about.
- She remembers the address of the restaurant.
- Dagny goes to the place, which is more like a diner, and sees a distinguished older guy behind the counter.
- Dagny strikes up a conversation while eating her super delicious meal.
- She asks the old guy if he'd like to come work for Taggart Transcontinental at their dining-car department.
- The old guy refuses and Dagny can't understand why he's wasting his cooking skills at a roadside diner.
- Dagny then asks him about the motor inventor.
- The man knows who she is talking about but refuses to tell her his name or how to reach him.
- Dagny then introduces herself and the man says he knows who she is.
- He tells her to give up her quest and then introduces himself as Hugh Akston.
- It's Francisco's philosophy professor! Dagny is stunned.
- She wonders if she's being punked, or if Dr. Akston is conducting a wacky experiment.
- He says no but won't explain himself further.
- He tells her that contradictions don't exist and that she'll figure out what is going on one of these days.
- She asks him about his ex-students and he tells her he is super proud of all of them.
- He tells Dagny that the motor inventor will find her one

day, and he gives her a cigarette with a dollar sign on it.
- Dagny heads home.
- Shortly afterwards all those bad laws about Colorado and Rearden Metal are passed. Colorado is also being taxed big-time to help support people in other states.
- Dagny is horrified and rushes to Colorado to try to talk to Ellis Wyatt and see what he'll do now that they've cut off his transportation.
- When she gets there she finds Ellis Wyatt's oil fields on fire, and he is gone.
- Ellis has left a note, though, about how he's leaving things as he found them. Peace out, suckers.
- And thus ends Volume 1.

Volume 2, Chapter 1

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Dr. Stadler, Dr. Ferris, Ellis Wyatt, Wet Nurse, Quentin Daniels

Summary

The Man Who Belonged On Earth

- This chapter title is a reference to an upcoming line of Dagny's, just FYI.
- We start our new Volume with Robert Stadler freezing in his office at the State Science Institute in New Hampshire. It's May but still cold.
- We've clearly jumped forward in time several months, since when we left Hank and Dagny it was either late summer or early fall.
- The winter was a bad one - lots of accidents and shortages across the country.
- Stadler is waiting on Dr. Ferris. He is feeling lonely and depressed.
- He recalls giving an interview a year ago where the guy garbled everything he said.
- Dr. Stadler has Dr. Ferris's new book on him: *Why Do You Think You Think?* Sounds like a winner, although nothing tops *The Vulture is Molting* in our opinion.
- We get some sound bites from the book. Ferris writes things like science is useless, no one can know anything, reason doesn't exist, everything is a contradiction, etc. It's very down on thinking and people in general.
- Stadler is really upset by the book since he doesn't believe anything it says.
- Ferris finally ambles in and is disrespectful toward Dr. Stadler.

- Stadler asks Ferris about the oil shortage. Ferris gets defensive and says the government is doing the best it can to fix the mess in the Wyatt Oil Fields. He also insists that the fire was an accident and that Wyatt died in it.
- Stadler is confused - he doesn't really know anything about Ellis Wyatt at all; he was just wondering why the building is freaking freezing.
- Ferris is relieved and says that the whole country was short on fuel this past winter and he'll make sure Stadler is more comfortable in the future.
- Stadler says this is stupid - the Wyatt Oil Fields couldn't have been the only source of oil in the whole country.
- Ferris hems and haws and says that the other closures in Colorado have been causing problems. Turns out Andrew Stockton has disappeared, too.
- Stadler then asks about Project X, which freaks Ferris out.
- He didn't need to worry, though, cause Stadler is clueless as usual.
- Project X stands for Project Xylophone; it's super secret and has to do with sound.
- Stadler finally asks Ferris what the heck is up with his book.
- Ferris seems smug and is mocking Stadler, which confuses Stadler.
- Ferris says he knows it's all garbage and that people are idiotic enough to believe it.
- Stadler is really just mad that there's an endorsement from him on the book.
- Ferris laughs and says that Stadler has as much contempt for society as he does, so chill out.
- Ferris then explains that the book gives people an excuse not to think by explaining that they *can't* think, and that this book is the road to popularity. Popularity means money from Congress.
- Stadler thinks this is all stupid; he hates having to deal with politics.
- Ferris finally leaves but lets us know that Lawrence Hammond has disappeared now, too. Ferris has it in for all the businesspeople who are disappearing.
- Stadler throws the book in the trash after Ferris leaves

and feels very depressed.
- But then he gets a phone call from Dagny. She wants a meeting.
- He's thrilled to hear from her and offers to come up to New York to see her in person.
- Scene cut! We catch up with Dagny now.
- The past few months have been very hard for her, since all her friends and fellow businesspeople from Colorado are disappearing.
- This is also causing difficulties for her railroad, since they are losing customers.
- No one knows why the people are disappearing or where they are going.
- We learn that the fires in Ellis Wyatt's oil fields have finally been put out, except for one oil well that's still burning. People call the lingering flame Wyatt's Torch.
- Dagny is fed up with the corruption in Washington. There's all sorts of shady dealing going on. People with connections can magically get trains and transportation, while other businesses are cut off without any help.
- The government has also started freezing people's bonds and accounts, but people with connections can get their accounts magically "unfrozen," while others are just screwed over.
- Dagny refuses to quit, though, and she hasn't given up on her quest to find the inventor of the Magical Motor.
- She took the cigarette that Hugh Akston gave her, with the dollar sign on it, to that newsstand man from way back in Volume 1 who collects cigarettes.
- She also brought in scientists and showed them the motor, but they either weren't smart enough to understand it or were scared of it.
- Silly Dagny, don't you know by now that you have to do everything yourself?
- Stadler finally shows up and is full of kind words for Dagny, but she brushes him off and gets down to business.
- She gives Stadler the lowdown on the motor and he is thrilled. He's totally confused about the inventor though. He doesn't get why the inventor didn't publish fancy articles about his theories, and he can't figure out who the

person could be.
- Stadler wants to put out a classified ad for the guy, but Dagny talks him out of it, saying that the inventor probably wouldn't respond to anything connected to the State Science Institute.
- Stadler sadly agrees.
- He asks to see the motor and Dagny shows him.
- Stadler then goes on one of his patented random rants, something Dagny seems to inspire in him. He carries on about how he is desperate to find cool, smart people in the world since he's always surrounded by brown-nosing morons.
- Dagny can feel his pain there.
- Finally Stadler tells her about a scientist named Quentin Daniels who lives in Utah. Daniels didn't want to have anything to do with the State Science Institute, apparently, so Dagny is down with that.
- As they are walking out of the tunnel where the motor is, someone asks our favorite question: who is John Galt?
- Stadler says he actually knew a John Galt. Let's hear it, Stadler!
- Stadler insists John Galt has to be dead, though, and he sounds freaked about the whole thing.
- Scene cut! Hank is back.
- He's gotten a letter from the State Science Institute wanting him to sell them some Rearden Metal for the mysterious Project X.
- Hank says no way and his secretary Gwen Ives is happy with that call.
- We learn that Hank's been dealing with lots of restrictions on his Rearden Metal and other bad stuff over the past few months.
- Hank is peeved because he isn't allowed to sell his metal to people who really need it, like Ken Danagger and Dagny.
- He also has a new person from Washington keeping an eye on his plant. It's a young guy that Hank derisively nicknames the Wet Nurse.
- The Wet Nurse is hip and tells Hank to go with the flow and get with the program and other such cliches. Hank

tells the Wet Nurse to stop spouting off party-line garbage all the time.

- We learn that Hank is becoming increasingly disillusioned. He actually laughed (scaring himself a little) when he heard that Ellis had torched his oil fields and split town.
- The Wet Nurse tells Hank that he'll be in trouble with Washington if he doesn't hand over his Rearden Metal to the State Science Institute.
- Hank says that he won't cooperate with a bad government that basically steals things from people.
- A guy comes from the State Science Institute and tries to convince Hank to hand over the metal, but Hank refuses again.
- Hank tells the guy that if the government wants to barge in with guns and take his metal they can do so, but he won't help them pretend they aren't stealing from him or forcing him to do stuff he'd rather not.
- The man tells Hank he'll regret this. Then he cackles evilly.
- Scene cut! Dagny is lounging at home, waiting for Hank.
- She decides that the only times she's really happy is when Hank is with her.
- Hank comes in with an expensive present - a ruby necklace.
- Dagny protests that it's too extravagant to wear anywhere. But Hank has an idea: he has Dagny strip and put the necklace on. And then they play chess. Oh, wait.
- Hank tells Dagny that she's like a work of art. We learn through a series of flashbacks that Hank has been spoiling Dagny with really elaborate gifts, like tropical flowers in the winter, crystal glasses, a gold necklace, and a fur cape. Kind of over-the-top, really. But Dagny is having fun with it as long as Hank is.
- The night he gives her the cape he takes her out for dinner.
- During the drive Dagny thinks about Hank and can't understand why he lets his family push him around and make him miserable.
- Hank tells Dagny that he enjoys spoiling her and finally

has a reason to spend his money.

- At dinner Hank notices all the miserable people around them and can't figure out why the world is the way it is.
- He tells Dagny that when he was working hard in his youth he wanted to earn a life of luxury and a night like the one they're having.
- We cut back to the present. Hank is walking to Dagny's place and thinking Deep Thoughts.
- He arrives and he and Dagny talk a while about life, their shared values, and the motor.
- Hank has a little epiphany and decides that as long as there's one person out there who could invent the motor, he won't lose his faith in the world or in people.
- Hanks explains his realization to Dagny. He says that the creeps running the country need some sort of moral sanction or approval from people and that he and Dagny can't cooperate with them.
- They both feel happier after this and embrace.

Volume 2, Chapter 2

Characters Involved

James Taggart, Cherryl Brooks, Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, Lillian Rearden, Orren Boyle

Summary

The Aristocracy of Pull

- This chapter title references an upcoming line of Francisco's.
- It's September 2. Things are still getting worse, and everyone who's anyone from Colorado has gone MIA.
- One man is left: Ted Nielsen of Nielsen Motors.
- Ted talks with Dagny - he's worried and can't understand why all his friends left, or where they went. He says his friend Roger Marsh asked to be chained to his desk and he disappeared a few weeks later.
- Ted promises to leave Dagny a note if he goes so she won't worry.
- But then he leaves, and there's no note. Thanks a lot, Ted.
- Dagny meets Quentin Daniels, a young scientist. He is cool and is not a fan of Stadler, so she hires him to work on figuring out her Mystery Motor. Quentin will work out of his home in Utah.
- Dagny is about to head off to James's wedding. Huh? Who's the bride?
- On her way out, Dagny runs into her friend the Newsstand Man. He tells her that, as far as he can tell, the cigarette with the dollar sign wasn't manufactured anywhere on the planet. John Galt and his crew are aliens! It's like the *V* pilot or something.
- Scene cut. Ken Danagger and Hank are having a secret meeting in New York.

- Ken complains about how Washington stinks and Hank agrees to sell him, super secretly, some Rearden Metal.
- Ken says peace out and then Lillian bursts in. Fail.
- Lillian is going to James's wedding, of course, and basically orders Hank to come with her.
- He is very reluctant, since he doesn't want to run into Dagny while he's with Lillian.
- Scene cut. Cherryl Brooks is in her wedding dress. Guess she's the bride! Our condolences.
- She's at her apartment and the only person there is a lame news columnist who is pretty much her only "friend."
- History of Cherryl and James: James started hanging around with Cherryl more and more and Cherryl felt honored by his attention.
- One night he took her to a fancy party. Cherryl blew her savings on a nice dress that turned out to be not the right sort of dress for the party. People were laughing at her but she held her head high.
- Afterwards Cherryl apologized to James for embarrassing him, and he proposed. A stunned Cherryl accepted.
- The news media began stalking her after that. James made her stay in her apartment in the slums so all the headlines could talk about the poor Cinderella girl that James was so generously helping.
- Cherryl was a bit uneasy about things, but still awed that James was marrying her.
- Scene cut. It's the wedding reception.
- James is speechifying about communism and how money is evil. Cherryl is standing around looking stunned and whispering how happy she is. She seems very confused and lonely.
- The crowd is a who's who of the looters. Everyone there either has James's protection or is seeking it. They are all about trading favors and being otherwise shady. As in the wedding in *The Godfather*, business is always mixed in with everything.
- James and his BFF Orren Boyle are talking.
- They have one of their patented Non-Threatening Sounding (But Really Threatening) Conversations.
- They are both making a bid for Wesley Mouch, head of

the Economic Planning Bureau, and his favors. Orren warns James to watch his back. Wesley isn't at the reception, which sends a message to James that he may be falling out of favor.

- Cherryl meanwhile thinks it's great that James has so many friends and is so respected.
- She spies Dagny. She goes up and tells her that she dislikes her on James's behalf and that she is the head Taggart woman now, so there. Dagny says whatever.
- Hank comes in with Lillian. He is totally miserable and wonders what he's doing there.
- Lillian heads over to chat with James.
- She smugly tells him that she hauled Hank here and that she can make him do anything she wants, so if James needs something he can let her know.
- James and Lillian size each other up and each decide the other is evil and cool.
- James confesses that he wishes he had control over his sister, and they discuss how she seems to have no weaknesses (i.e. affairs) to use against her. Ah, the irony.
- Lillian goes to talk to Dagny. She confronts her about wearing the Rearden Metal bracelet.
- Dagny refuses to give it back to Lillian.
- Lillian tells Dagny that people will jump to the wrong conclusion about her if she keeps wearing it and assume she's sleeping with Hank. Dagny brushes her off coolly and basically owns Lillian in the scene. Game, set, match.
- Hank ambles up and makes Lillian apologize for accusing Dagny of having an affair with him.
- Looters are chatting when suddenly Francisco pops up! He's the ultimate party crasher.
- James and Francisco chat. Francisco mocks him and fills us in on his business situation: turns out James and his looter friends own tons of d'Anconia Copper stock due to a dirty deal with government men in Chile. James freaks when Francisco mentions this out loud.
- Francisco then sidles up to Dagny and reminds her that John Galt is coming soon to claim his railroad in Colorado. Dagny is not happy and wants him to go away.
- Francisco chats with some random people and then

launches into one of the book's epic speeches: The Money Speech.

- In a nutshell: Money is good. It's the product of a free, hardworking people. Civilized people deal in trade and with money; without money, people would resort to violence and guns. Always be wary of people who hate money. America is about making yourself by making money. That's a good thing, but America needs to watch out for looters. The end.
- That probably wasn't what people had in mind for a wedding reception toast.
- Everyone at the party complains about how awful a speech it was.
- Francisco then goes to talk to Hank.
- He tries to get Hank to guess who the guiltiest person in the room is and hints that it's someone who lies to himself. Hank guesses wrong. He says James, then Francisco himself.
- Francisco's talking about you, Hank!
- Francisco gives him some advice: never do business with d'Anconia Copper.
- Francisco then says tomorrow a fire will destroy lots of d'Anconia property and the d'Anconia stock is going to crash. He's a fortune teller!
- He then stages a hilariously mean scene - he loudly begs Hank to lend him some money, making sure a guy overhears him.
- The guy comes to question Francisco and Francisco lets him in on a "secret" - that his business has gone bad and is about to crash. Tough luck for the stock owners!
- The guy runs off and basically incites a riot at the wedding reception.
- The only calm people in the fray are Hank, Dagny, and Francisco, who watch each other across the room.

Volume 2, Chapter 3

Characters Involved

Hank Rearden, Lillian Rearden, Dagny Taggart, Francisco d'Anconia, Ken Danagger

Summary

White Blackmail

- After the reception-turned-riot, Hank drops Lillian off at the train station and heads over to see Dagny.
- He apologizes for showing up with Lillian, but Dagny says no worries, she knew what she was getting into when they started the affair.
- He asks again who her past lover was, and Dagny asks him why he needs to know so badly. Hank has no answer.
- She tells him to stop feeling unnecessary guilt.
- They talk about Francisco, and Dagny warns Hank to watch his back around him.
- Hank confesses that he may have been lying to himself when he made his "Dagny is Impure" speech back at Ellis Wyatt's house. Dagny says she already knew that.
- Scene cut! Hank goes back to the Wayne-Falkland Hotel in the morning to find Lillian there. Yipes.
- She tells him she knows he's having an affair, and he says so what.
- He won't tell her who with, and Lillian guesses it's a showgirl.
- Lillian lays into him. Hank tells her she can condemn him all she wants but he's not going to stop his affair.
- She then refuses to give him a divorce and rants about how horrible he is and she wins because she has dirt on him now.
- Hanks tells her to leave and thinks that she's lucky he

didn't kill her.

- Scene cut. Dr. Ferris has come to visit Hank at his office.
- Ferris has come to blackmail Hank. He gets right to the point: he knows about his illegal dealings with Ken Danagger. He tells Hank that he now has to hand over lots of Rearden Metal to the State Science Institute, which he had refused to do before.
- Ferris then tries to get Hank to come over to the dark side and join him in his corrupt Washington power games.
- He lets Hank in on a secret: the government made the ridiculous laws so that people will have to break them. By turning everyone into fearful criminals, the government can have more power and can rule people by beating them down.
- Hank tells Ferris he won't cooperate and he'll have to take him to court. Then he has Miss Ives throw Ferris out.
- Scene cut. Eddie is back! He's speaking to his Mystery Worker friend in the cafeteria.
- Eddie gives us the dirt on Ken and Hank's upcoming trial. They've both been indicted. Dagny is worried about Ken because he seems beaten down and ready to quit.
- Dagny thinks a "destroyer" is at work in the world, getting to talented businesspeople and making them give up. She hates the destroyer and wants to find him.
- Eddie is very worried and says Dagny is exhausted and works too hard.
- He talks about how he's found her asleep in her office, and Mystery Worker apparently asks what she looks like when she sleeps (creepy!). Eddie tells him (also creepy!) and admits that it's weird of him. Apparently Dagny looks like an innocent child when she's asleep.
- Scene cut! Dagny is at Ken Danagger's office waiting to meet with him. He is running very late for their appointment, which baffles his secretary. Ken is usually super punctual and would never make Dagny wait so rudely. Ken is currently meeting with some mystery man and has been for hours.
- Dagny waits for hours and gets increasingly nervous.
- Finally, Dagny and the secretary burst in on Ken and see the shadow of a man leaving.

- Ken looks totally different now - much younger and happier.
- Dagny is dismayed to see that the destroyer got to him first, and that Ken will now be quitting and disappearing.
- He tells Dagny that it's a good thing and she'll understand soon.
- He gives her a message for Hank and says Hank is his best friend.
- Dagny begs Ken to stay and explain things to her, but he refuses and says that she'll be joining him someday in the near future.
- Scene cut. Hank is in his office thinking about Ken Danagger. He is sad about how they all waste so much time working hard and putting up with people they hate rather than spending their downtime with potential friends. He regrets missing out on time with Ken.
- Francisco then shows up. He's everywhere!
- Hank and Francisco talk about Ken, and Francisco confronts Hank about his split personality. He asks why Hank uses one moral code in business and another in his personal life.
- Next Francisco gives us the meaning behind the book's title. He says that Hank and other successful businesspeople support the world, just like Atlas did in Greek mythology. But Atlas/Hank is suffering, so why not shrug off the world.
- Then alarms go off - there is trouble down in the mill. Hank and Francisco rush down to get things under control. They work together well as a team putting out a fire.
- Francisco nearly falls and Hank yanks him back to safety. Hank feels paternal towards Francisco.
- When they finally return to Hank's office, Francisco refuses to talk to Hank anymore, saying that he's learned that Hank isn't quite ready to hear the rest yet.

Volume 2, Chapter 4

Characters Involved

Hank Rearden, Lillian Rearden, Mrs. Rearden, Philip Rearden, Dagny Taggart, Eddie Willers, Francisco d'Anconia

Summary

The Sanction of the Victim

- Yet another chapter title shout-out, this time to an upcoming line from Hank.
- It's Thanksgiving at the Rearden House. We get a run-down of how much money the Reardens (Lillian) blew on Thanksgiving while other people are starving.
- Thanksgiving dinner: overpriced. Time with the Rearden clan: priceless.
- Or not worthless, in Hank's opinion.
- The Reardens start going off on Hank about his trial, saying that he's being selfish and stupid and should think of what would happen to them if their primary breadwinner gets hauled off to jail.
- Philip tells Hank that the age of heroes is over and he needs to get with the program and cooperate with Washington.
- Hank begins to realize that he's giving them power over him, the "sanction of the victim," by letting them verbally abuse him all the time.
- He tries to figure out Lillian - she seems unusually happy since finding out about his affair, like she's won something. But he pulls back before totally condemning her for being a manipulative monster.
- Philip does more political ranting and Hank finally tells him to shut up or get out of his house.
- Mama Rearden and Lillian are stunned and they all

protest.

- Hank says Philip is an adult and Hank is paying for him. Philip can either show Hank respect or get out of his house.
- Hank then says he's leaving for New York.
- During his drive he recalls a recent conversation with the Wet Nurse, who is starting to question his Washington crowd more and more.
- He then thinks about how Dagny is struggling to keep the railroad running and how screwed the country is.
- He goes to Dagny's office and finds her hard at work.
- He tells her not to worry about his trial, because he has a plan. The two have a quiet little Thanksgiving celebration together.
- Scene cut! It's the day of the trial. We learn that since Ken Danagger went away, the country has been hard-up for coal, and times are bad.
- The courtroom is packed and the trial will be broadcast over the radio.
- Hank is being tried by a panel of three judges.
- Hank channels his inner Jack McCoy and delivers a Smackdown Courtroom Address.
- In a nutshell: Hank says he doesn't recognize the court's right to try him. He calls the government out for being a bunch of corrupt thugs. He says he doesn't recognize their right to force him to work for them, and if they want his property they'll have to take it by force. He says he works for himself and thinks their moral system is garbage.
- The courtroom goes wild with applause.
- The judges quickly backpedal and insist they are Hank's friends, but he's not having it.
- The verdict comes in: Hank is fined a few thousand bucks and can leave.
- On his way out people praise him and also beg him to save them.
- Hank is on an emotional high.
- Scene cut. Hank is with Dagny and they are both thrilled about sticking it to the looters.
- Later, after a frustrating meeting with some idiot businessmen, Hank decides he wants to see Francisco. He

goes to the Wayne-Falkland hotel to track him down.

- Hank barges in on Francisco with some sort of engineering design scheme that Francisco quickly covers up.
- He's stunned to see Hank.
- Hank wants to hear more from Francisco about his beliefs, but Francisco says it's still too soon.
- Hank tries to talk out his own ideas about the sanction of the victim. Francisco says Hank is close to getting it, but he's still missing the point with his personal life.
- It's time for Francisco's Let's Talk About Sex speech.
- In a nutshell: Sex isn't a bad thing and is actually an expression of people's deepest values. People who have good values and have sex with people they love and admire are good. People who think sex is bad and sleep around indiscriminately are bad and have bad morals. According to his speech, sex is what you make it; it ought to be a good thing and not shameful. He says only people who have bad values and who hate themselves have indiscriminate sex. Finally he confesses that he's never slept with any of the women he's been seen with and that he just lets people think he's a playboy.
- Hank realizes that he's made a mistake with how he views his relationship with Dagny.
- Ironic conversation time! Francisco confesses he's only loved one woman in his life, that he still loves her and hopes they'll be together again someday. Hank says best of luck on that. Ah, the irony - they both love Dagny!
- Hank then tells Francisco that he intends to outlast the looters and hang in there for his decent customers. He says Francisco will help him and confesses that he's ordered a huge batch of copper from d'Anconia Copper.
- Francisco freaks out and yells at him. He swears by the woman he loves that he's still Hank's friend, even though Hank is going to hate him soon.
- Later we find out that Ragnar, our favorite pirate, sank the ship carrying Hank's copper shipment. Hank hates Francisco now and wants to kill him.

Volume 2, Chapter 5

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, Lillian Rearden, James Taggart, Mr. Weatherby

Summary

Account Overdrawn

- Since Hank didn't get his copper he couldn't get Taggart Transcontinental the Rearden Metal it needed. Oops.
- We get a long rundown of how bad things are in the country: there are shortages everywhere, businesses are failing all over the place, people are poor and desperate, and the government is acting like things are fine while getting increasingly repressive.
- We get some examples of the type of damaging rhetoric the looters use, too: professors tell people not to think, religious leaders rant about how people are sinful and totally had all this coming. Industrial accidents are more frequent. Bridges and buildings are condemned, and the only bridge left going over the Mississippi is the Taggart Bridge. New York makes everyone move to the lower levels of skyscrapers to save money on power. Ragnar is increasing his pirate raids.
- It's February 15. Hank is meeting with some guys who are illegally operating a coal mine and doing black market dealings.
- Dagny is meeting with the Taggart Transcontinental Board of Directors.
- A Mr. Weatherby is there, from Washington.
- The board is discussing who's in power in Washington and which factions they need to appeal to in order to get deals for the railroad.

- The meeting is about closing the John Galt Line. They can no longer afford to operate it.
- Dagny calls them all out and says she won't cooperate with them and she won't make the decision for them. She's going to abstain from voting so they'll have to make a decision themselves for once. It's fitting, since she warned them this would happen, and it's their own fault the railroad is in dire straights and the John Galt Line has to close.
- The Board talks in circles for ages and finally someone gives the order to close the John Galt Line.
- Dagny is devastated. She thinks of Nat Taggart and understands how he must have felt when he was struggling to finish his bridge across the Mississippi and didn't think he'd be able to do it.
- On her way out of the building, she runs into Francisco.
- He takes her to dinner.
- She's not sure why he's being so nice to her now.
- They talk about Dagny's feelings, and she brings up Nat Taggart. She thinks Nat wouldn't have survived the looters.
- Francisco tries to get Dagny to see that she shouldn't cooperate with the looters and do things like build them nice railroads, but Dagny isn't having it.
- They start talking about their ancestors, and Francisco tells us the story of Sebastián d'Anconia, who came to Argentina from Spain. Sebastián waited fifteen years to be with the woman he loved, and when they were finally united, Sebastián knew his battle was over.
- Dagny finds this story suspicious and wonders if Francisco is hinting about her, but then she brushes the thought aside.
- She then randomly brings up Hank. Well, it seems random to Francisco at least.
- She asks what he did to Hank, since Hank won't tell her.
- He brushes her off and says he'll take her home.
- But then he offers to tell her who John Galt is! OK, let's have it.
- John Galt is (drumroll) Prometheus who changed his mind! What?

- Historical Lesson! You can read more about this in John Galt's "Character Analysis," but basically Prometheus, in Greek myth, stole fire from the gods to give to mankind. His punishment was to be chained to a rock so that vultures could eat him all day - for eternity. (Those gods were mean.) Francisco is using the myth as an analogy, but he says that mankind is punishing Prometheus, so Prometheus took back his fire and other "gifts of civilization."
- So now John Galt is an eternally youthful, sea-dwelling Greek god who moonlights as a "second assistant bookkeeper" (to Dr. Stadler). Good grief.
- Scene cut. Six weeks later, Hank and Dagny are in Colorado. The John Galt Line is closing today and they want to take the last train out of Colorado.
- Colorado is a shadow of its former self, and panicky people are trying to get on the last train out so they won't be trapped there. It's all very depressing.
- Scene cut. Lillian and James are having lunch, talking in circles trying to one-up each other.
- They complain about Hank and Dagny, and Lillian hints that she'd appreciate James's help sticking it to Hank.
- Later Lillian calls to have some flowers sent to Hank as a slap in the face rather than a sweet gesture.
- But she learns that he's not on the train back to New York and cancels the order.
- She calls Miss Ives to confirm it, and Miss Ives says that's a mistake, Hank is on the Taggart Comet coming back.
- Lillian realizes he's riding under an assumed name.
- Scene cut. Lillian goes to meet Hank's train at the Taggart terminal.
- She wants to see him with his mistress, but only sees him walking alone. She's disappointed.
- But then she sees Dagny exit the car he was in and finally realizes who his mistress is. She is dismayed because she thought she could torment him for sleeping with a floozy. She doesn't know how to handle the Dagny thing.
- Lillian tries to act casual when she encounters them both.
- She and Hank to go his hotel and talk. Hank admits that Dagny is his mistress and says he won't stop seeing her.

He tells Lillian she can have a divorce - he doesn't care.

- Out of spite, Lillian refuses to grant him a divorce, then rants about Dagny. He tells her to shut up.
- Lillian threatens him again and then leaves. For once, Hank feels guiltless and free.

Volume 2, Chapter 6

Characters Involved

Wesley Mouch, Fred Kinnan, Eugene Lawson, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Weatherby, Dr. Ferris, James Taggart, Orren Boyle, Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden

Summary

Miracle Metal

- A Looters club meeting is going down in Washington.
- Who is there: Evil scientist Dr. Ferris; Bad Banker Eugene Lawson; everyone's favorite politician Wesley Mouch; our bad seed James Taggart and his BFF Orren Boyle; a guy named Fred Kinnan; and a Mr. Thompson, none other than the Head of State of the USA.
- They are all playing an exciting round of the blame game, griping at one another for various problems and complaining about how bad things are and how they need to do something.
- Wesley is snippy; Mr. Thompson is chilling on the sidelines, letting everyone else duke it out; Orren is complaining; James and Eugene are spouting rhetoric and whining. Fred and Dr. Ferris seem to be the only ones willing to call everyone out and admit that they all just want power.
- After complaining and talking in circles for a while, we learn that they are meeting about a specific directive that they want to pass.
- Thompson tells Wesley to go ahead with the directive; no one will oppose it in Washington. He then leaves the meeting.
- Wesley starts reading off Directive 10-289 to everyone, though they are familiar with it.

- Directive 10-289 Rundown: The goal of this directive is to achieve "total stability."
- Main points: No one is allowed to leave their current jobs, and the Unification Board will handle all employment issues. No business owner is allowed to quit and disappear. All patents and copyrights will be handed over to the government. No new inventions can go on the market. Everyone has to spend the same amount of money they did in the previous year, or the Basic Year. Everyone's salaries are now frozen.
- Everyone starts talking quickly, trying to justify the Directive by saying that they'll achieve total stability and security with it.
- They then run through the points that will cause potential problems.
- Wesley says they have enough Emergency Power to cover passing this Directive, which is otherwise pretty unconstitutional.
- We learn that Fred Kinnan runs the labor unions, and he demands to have his people stacked on the Unification Board.
- They all say that some people will just have to be "sacrificed." No welfare for people like the researchers who will be out of jobs when they close down the laboratories (no new inventions, remember).
- They are concerned that Hank won't cooperate and hand over his patents - the government can't legally force him to do it. But James promises that he has dirt on Hank and can make him do it.
- The meeting concludes. We think this Directive thing merits a big doom: Doom!
- Scene cut. Dagny wakes up early in her office after like three hours of sleep, yet she's still excited to start her day. Is this a Folger's Coffee commercial?
- She is running through all the problems she has to tackle today when Francisco calls and asks if she's read the paper yet. She says no. He says get one.
- Dagny reads about the Directive passing and is furious.
- She marches into James's office and resigns on the spot, saying she won't work for a bunch of corrupt, immoral,

power-mad morons.

- Dagny bids Eddie a fond farewell and says she's going to her family's cabin near Woodstock to think things over and decide what to do.
- Dagny calls Hank to tell him where she's going and he says he'll come get her. Hank has two weeks to hand over his Rearden Metal patent and he's not sure what will happen to him when he refuses. He wants Dagny safely out of harm's way.
- Scene cut. Things are bad at Rearden Steel. Lots of good employees quit and run for it after the Directive passes. No one wants to be chained to his job like a slave.
- The Wet Nurse is worried for Hank.
- Everyone waits anxiously. Nobody is sure how much worse things will get now that the government has gone all crazy dictatorship on people.
- Lillian randomly goes out of town, which is shifty.
- Finally the deadline arrives and Ferris comes to collect Hank's patents.
- Hank refuses and Ferris pulls out his secret weapon. He knows all about Hank's relationship with Dagny and will expose it, ruining Dagny's reputation, if Hank doesn't sign his patents over.
- Hank is horrified and comes to a Major Epiphany, or realization.
- The Epiphany: Hank realizes that he's made a huge mistake and has been complicit in the looters' awful moral system. He treated his relationship with Dagny as a shameful affair, which opened the door for people like Ferris to blackmail him. He should have been honest about his relationship from the start to avoid this sort of thing, and now he's screwed. Hank realizes that the looters prey on good people and use their morals against them.
- Hank can't let Dagny's name be smeared. He now realizes that he's in love with Dagny and has done wrong by her. He has an epic flashback to the first time he saw Dagny. It was love at first sight, even though he didn't realize it then.
- In his mind, Hank tells the Dagny he met a few years ago

that he loves her. Then he signs the "Gift Certificate" handing over his Rearden Metal. Hanks thinks that he'll pay the price for his folly, but he won't let Dagny pay it for him.

Volume 2, Chapter 7

Characters Involved

Eddie Willers, Hank Rearden, Dagny Taggart, Ragnar Danneskjöld, Dave Mitchum, Clifton Locey, Kip Chalmers

Summary

The Moratorium on Brains

- Francisco strikes again - the title of this chapter is an upcoming line of his.
- Eddie and his Mystery Worker friend are chatting again. We learn that things have gotten much worse since the awful Directive passed.
- People are leaving their jobs en masse and wandering the country trying to survive. They are called deserters and are leaving on principle. The people staying at their jobs are often scumbags. Eddie can't believe what's happening.
- A man named Clifton Locey has taken over Dagny's job. No one in the media is admitting that she actually quit, but Eddie of course knows the truth.
- Locey is a "trained seal" (good one, Eddie!) - a total idiot. He's mismanaging everything.
- We learn that no one believes Hank signed over Rearden Metal willingly.
- Rumor has it that Ragnar is at it again: he's destroying any factory that tries to produce Rearden Metal.
- Eddie lets slip where Dagny is hiding out (no one was supposed to know but him) and says he's worried about her being on her own.
- We learn that Mystery Worker is about to take a one-month vacation, like he does every year. Eddie says he's lucky.
- Scene cut. Hank is walking home from his mills to his new

apartment.

- Hank has left Lillian and is in the process of bribing a bunch of judges to get him a divorce.
- He hasn't called Dagny. He thinks she'll hate him if she ever finds out why he signed over his Metal (because he's trying to protect her).
- Hank is taking the time to think things through and pull himself together before he goes to Dagny. He wants to be worthy of her when he goes to tell her he loves her.
- Hank is then accosted by a man who gives him a bar of gold and says he wants to talk.
- Hank is confused.
- The man says he is paying Hank back what he's been robbed. He says he couldn't stay away after the Rearden Metal debacle and he had to talk to Hank.
- Hank is more confused.
- The man says they have a common friend who couldn't make it, so this guy came instead.
- He introduces himself: it's Ragnar Danneskjöld. Holy smokes, Batman!
- Hank drops his bar of gold. Is Ragnar also a leprechaun?
- Ragnar explains that in the world in which they are living, piracy can be a moral option. Ragnar has clearly watched *Pirates of the Caribbean* one too many times.
- Ragnar says he lives openly by force and refuses to comply with the looters' system.
- Hank thinks piracy is bad and nearly admits that quitting and disappearing like Ellis and Ken would be preferable.
- Ragnar then explains his quest: He is trying to combat the evil of the Robin Hood myth. (Huh?)
- OK, so Ragnar says that the Robin Hood myth has become a way for people to justify need as a ruling system. People now think they deserve what they haven't earned. It's charity run amuck. So Ragnar is taking away from the looters on behalf of his "clients," people like Hank who have been robbed and extorted over the years. Ragnar divides his booty up among his clients and even has bank accounts for them. Turns out there is an underground bank operating on the gold standard, and Hank has lots of gold stashed there. (Ragnar works for Gringotts?)

- The underground bank is called the Mulligan Bank. A clue!
- Hank is lost.
- Ragnar just can't stop confessing things. He tells Hank he's responsible for destroying Orren Boyle's factories and that he'll take out anyone else trying to manufacture Rearden Metal.
- Hank nearly laughs in glee.
- Just then a police car pulls up. They are looking for Ragnar!
- Hank lies and says he hasn't seen any Viking pirates lurking around with bars of gold, nope.
- This Nordic-looking guy? It's Hank's new bodyguard.
- Ragnar is amused and relieved that Hank covered for him.
- He tells Hank to keep his gold and then heads off to the high seas again.
- Scene cut! We're on the Taggart Comet, heading off to California.
- Kip Chalmers, a looter, is running for public office. He's set to give a speech in California, but the train is running late.
- He's in a car with his pals: Lester Tuck, his campaign manager; Laura Bradford, his mistress; and Gilbert Keith-Worthing, a snobby British intellectual.
- The train stops. There was a problem with the track that blew out the engine, leaving them stuck.
- Kip throws a massive hissy fit and threatens to bring the wrath of Washington down on them if they don't get the train moving pronto.
- So the conductor calls Colorado Division Superintendent Dave Mitchum. Dave panics, since he has no desire to make an enemy out of Washington.
- He calls around but learns that there are no spare engines available anywhere. He panics again.
- Bill Brent, the station dispatcher, says to chill out, there's nothing they can do now. They'll have to wait till morning for someone to come fix the problem.
- Bill tells this to Kip, who freaks some more.
- Kip sends a threatening telegram to James Taggart, telling him to get the Comet working now or else.

- James spazzes out. He calls trained seal Clifton Locey and tells him to fix it.
- Locey calls Mitchum and yells at him. Without coming right out and saying it, he encourages Mitchum to use whatever engine is available to get the train moving.
- See, there's an old coal-burning engine they can use, but it would be very dangerous to use it going through the Taggart Tunnel. No one wants to make Kip Chalmers wait, but no one wants to be liable for any ensuing disaster either. It's a no-win situation.
- Mitchum calls everyone he can think of in a panic, trying to avoid being responsible for carrying out Locey's vague order. Locey has arranged it so that Mitchum will be the fall guy.
- Mitchum sends out an order to get him the "best engine available."
- A nameless trainmaster, whose brother just killed himself, is totally jaded and sends the order through, even though he knows it's bad news.
- Mitchum then gets ready to run off to another station to "try to find a diesel engine." He wants to be far away in case disaster happens.
- Bill Brent says he won't carry out these orders and quits on the spot.
- Mitchum finds a young, impressionable guy to carry out his orders.
- An engineer on the train sees the order and refuses to drive the train. He quits and walks off.
- They find a drunk engineer named Joe Scott to drive the train.
- The coal-burning engine is hooked up and the train takes off.
- We get a rundown of passengers: they are all horrible looter people.
- The train reaches the tunnel and heads inside. We hear that the last thing any of the passengers saw was the flame of Wyatt's Torch burning in the distance.

Volume 2, Chapter 8

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Francisco d'Anconia, James Taggart, Hank Rearden, Eddie Willers, James Taggart

Summary

By Our Love

- Dagny is having a hard time on her own in Woodstock. She is really depressed and can't figure out what to do with her life. She can't work for the railroad under the Directive, but she can't bring herself to let the railroad go either. She's in limbo.
- She also misses Hank, but she wants to pull herself together before seeing him again.
- Dagny is hanging out listening to classical music on the radio.
- A Hammond car pulls up - it's Francisco!
- They greet each other as they did in childhood, with their nicknames.
- He then grabs her into a bear hug and she realizes how much he still loves her.
- She's caught up in the moment but then remembers how he dumped her and pulls away from him.
- Francisco is excited and tells her he is sorry for leaving her alone here in the woods. He says if he thought she was ready to quit, he'd have come to see her sooner.
- Dagny is confused.
- Francisco confesses that he is deliberately sabotaging his own business because he's on some sort of quest against the looters.
- Dagny is conflicted and can't quite bring herself to believe that quitting is the right thing to do.

- Francisco gives her a big pep talk, telling her the looters are basically holding her own virtues for ransom. He tells her she doesn't need them and shouldn't let them use her.
- But just then a radio announcement breaks in: the Taggart Tunnel in Colorado has collapsed, in one of the worst railroad disasters in history.
- The Comet went into the tunnel using a coal engine. Smoke from the engine filled the tunnel and everyone started to suffocate. Someone pulled the emergency break and they couldn't get the train moving again. Then another train, an Army Freight, came along, hit the Comet, and caused a massive explosion that brought the entire tunnel down. Only one person escaped alive from the suffocation - the train's fireman, Luke Beal.
- Dagny screams and runs out to her car. Francisco begs her not to go back, but Dagny isn't listening and drives off frantically.
- Scene cut. James is in his office staring at his letter of resignation. He's is super stressed out but is trying to ignore his problems.
- He then barges out and starts yelling at Eddie Willers, demanding to know where Dagny is. He blames her for the disaster and wants her to come fix it.
- Eddie is refusing to tell him when Dagny enters, dramatically.
- Everyone in the office is relieved except Eddie.
- James starts yelling at Dagny but she just ignores him and has Eddie bring her up to speed.
- Dagny gets back to work immediately and tells Eddie to bring her an old railroad map from the days before the tunnel. They'll keep running trains without the tunnel.
- We learn about the frozen train phenomenon: since May, train crews have just been walking off and leaving trains stranded in the middle of nowhere.
- Wesley Mouch calls Dagny and claims he's glad she's back.
- She tells him to shut it and to get her Mr. Weatherby.
- Weatherby gets on the phone. Dagny says she'll only talk to him and he better keep all the Washington goons off her back. She won't deal with Mouch cause she remembers how he betrayed Hank way back in the day

when he was Hank's "Washington man."

- Dagny calls Hank and they are both depressed. Dagny says she doesn't care about the Gift Certificate thing since she's given in, too. She says they'll both go down with the ship.

Volume 2, Chapter 9

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, Eddie Willers, Quentin Daniels

Summary

The Face Without Pain or Fear or Guilt

- Eddie gets a turn in the chapter-title-line game here - this title references an upcoming line of his.
- Dagny is at her apartment. She feels numb and composed and silently tells the man she's been looking for but hasn't found - the embodiment of her values - that she'll keep working in his honor even though she knows she'll never meet him now.
- Francisco comes in to see her.
- He is sad and resigned.
- Dagny explains that she can't quit and has to keep fighting - that it's wrong to give in and give up.
- Francisco counter-argues that it's wrong to work for the looters in any way.
- They are at an impasse, but Francisco agrees that it's Dagny's decision to make, even though he disagrees with it.
- Dagny tells Francisco that she doesn't hate him, and Francisco confesses in a roundabout way that he's doing what he's doing because of his love for Dagny.
- She asks if he's the destroyer she's been hunting for, and he says not exactly.
- He tells Dagny he'll wait for her.
- Then Hank walks in. Love triangle drama!
- Hank immediately goes all alpha male, going off on Francisco and telling him to stay away from Dagny.

- Francisco is hurt and tries to leave quickly but Hank isn't through.
- Hank rants at him a bit and says his word is worthless and then recalls the wording Francisco used to talk about his past love. He quietly asks if Francisco is in love with Dagny, and Francisco says yes.
- Hank punches Francisco in the face, knocking him down.
- Dagny screams at them to stop.
- Francisco gets up, bows to them, and quietly leaves.
- Dagny and Hank then start fighting, and she confesses that she used to be Francisco's lover.
- The tension goes up a notch, and then Hank and Dagny have angry sex.
- They are much calmer afterwards and seem to have reached a deeper understanding.
- Then someone arrives with a telegram for Dagny.
- It's from Quentin Daniels. He is quitting and refuses to work on the motor anymore because he doesn't want any of his discoveries to ever be used by the looters.
- Dagny is very upset and shows Hank the telegram.
- She calls Quentin and begs him to not go anywhere, that she's coming out to Utah to speak to him.
- Hank is reluctant to let her go, since he still wants to talk to her and tell her he loves her.
- But Dagny has to leave and she tells Hank to fly out to meet her in Colorado in a week. He says all right.
- Scene cut. Eddie comes over after Hank leaves to get instructions from Dagny while she's packing.
- We learn that Eddie called Dan Conway for help a while back but Dan refused to help him out. He's living on a ranch in Arizona and sounded defeated and broken.
- They are talking in Dagny's bedroom while she packs and she opens the closet.
- Eddie spies a bathrobe with the monogram HR.
- He suddenly realizes that she is having an affair with Hank and is really upset because he realizes he's jealous.
- Eddie realizes that he's been in love with Dagny for years and didn't know it. He's upset and embarrassed.
- He sees Dagny off, then heads to the Taggart Cafeteria.
- Mystery Worker friend is there and Eddie talks to him.

- Eddie is noticeably upset but brushes it off and fills the Mystery Worker in on Quentin Daniels. Finally he confesses why he's upset and reveals that Hank and Dagny are sleeping together. He's sad that they are both doomed. Mystery Worker seems to freak out about this, which really confuses Eddie. Seems Mystery Worker might have a crush, too!

Volume 2, Chapter 10

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Owen Kellogg, Jeff Allen, the Starnes kids, John Galt, Quentin Daniels

Summary

The Sign of the Dollar

- In a recall of Dagny's introductory scene, she is riding alone in a train car, listening to the wheels and thinking about Big Issues.
- The journey is very slow and depressing, since Dagny is seeing what a sorry state the country is in.
- She hears a ruckus in the hall - a tramp has hopped on and a railroad employee is trying to throw him off. Dagny says to leave him alone and asks the tramp if he'd like to be her guest for dinner.
- Dagny starts talking with the tramp, who is very polite.
- He lets her know how bad things are in the country - he can't find work and he has to watch out for the government, since they've started arrested unemployed people.
- He tells her he used to work in factories and had been in Colorado. But then everyone disappeared and the factories closed.
- He says before all this he worked at the same factory for twenty years and was a foreman. Then he asks who John Galt is.
- But this guy says he knows who he is, or at least is afraid that he does. OK, but this had better not be a myth.
- He settles in to tell her a long story.
- Turns out the tramp worked at the Twentieth Century Motor Factory.

- He worked there for twenty years while Jed Starnes ran the place. Then Jed died and his awful kids took over.
- We learn that the kids were communists.
- They said they were going to run things differently and turned the factory into a "family." Their motto was "need not greed."
- They planned to do away with salaries and said they would start paying everyone according to their "need," which was determined by a vote at a mass meeting that happened a few times a year.
- This turned into a huge disaster. People of ability were forced to work more hours to help pay for those who were more "needy." Honorable people didn't speak up about their "need" and weren't paid much; dishonest people used the need system to get tons of money by lying about their "needs."
- All the people in the factory and the factory town gradually grew to hate each other. They started drinking, gambling, fighting, etc.
- People were turning into monsters, and the Starnes children were horrible: Eric was slimy and hung around wanting to be everyone's "pal"; Gerald was greedy and flaunted all the money he was paying himself; and Ivy was vindictive and loved humiliating people by making them come to her with their "needs" and ask for money.
- Twelve years ago, at the initial meeting where this plan was proposed, everyone voted yes for it and thought they were doing a moral thing. But one guy stood up and said that this was horrible and that he was going to "stop the motor of the world."
- The guy's name: John Galt. Holy cow!
- Scene cut. Dagny is sleeping, or trying to. She can't stop thinking about the tramp's story and she realizes that John Galt is the destroyer she's been looking for.
- The train stops moving. It's a frozen train and the entire crew has gone.
- A guy walks up to her: it's Owen Kellogg!
- Dagny and Owen are glad to see each other and team up to take care of business.
- Dagny makes a speech to the passengers, who all act like

whiny brats. Dagny basically tells them to shut up.
- Owen says he'll walk with Dagny to find a telephone, since it's nighttime and going alone would be dangerous.
- Dagny tells everyone that she's leaving her tramp friend in charge while she's gone. She asks his name: it's Jeff Allen.
- Owen and Dagny set off into the night, and it's very creepy.
- They talk and Dagny tries to figure out Owen's motive for working menial jobs.
- He tells her his mind is no longer on the labor market since it exploits people.
- He then says he is about to head off for a one-month vacation. A clue!
- He gives her a cigarette, and Dagny flips when she sees it has a dollar sign on it.
- Owen gives a mini speech about how the dollar sign represents all the best of America.
- He gives her the pack to remind her that she has a true homeland.
- They finally reach a phone and Dagny has a hilarious conversation with a total imbecile. Getting the person to do anything to help her is like pulling teeth, and Owen can't believe she's actually working with people like that.
- In the distance is an airfield. Owen tells Dagny to go get a plane if she can and get where she needs to. He'll wait for the men to show up to run the train.
- Dagny says thanks and gives him a few messages in case something happens. She says to tell Eddie to hire Jeff Allen and to let Hank know what's happened. She'll call as soon as she can.
- Dagny then runs off and buys a plane on the spot.
- She takes off for Utah.
- But when she arrives she learns that Quentin just left and she sees him flying off in another plane.
- Dagny chases after the plane. It's an airplane chase sequence!
- Dagny is upset and at the end of her rope. She feels she has to find this destroyer or die trying.
- Looks like the last bit is likely. Dagny follows the plane into Colorado and then the plane disappears in a

mountain range. Dagny tries to follow and can't figure out where the plane could have landed.

- She does some daredevil stunts in her search and ends up losing control of her plane.
- She crashes, and as she's going down her last words are: "Oh hell! Who is John Galt?"

Volume 3, Chapter 1

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, John Galt, Midas Mulligan, Judge Narragansett, Ellis Wyatt, Andrew Stockton, Dick McNamara, Kay Ludlow, Hugh Akston, Dwight Sanders, Lawrence Hammond, Quentin Daniels, Richard Halley, Dr. Hendricks

Summary

Atlantis

- Dagny wakes up in a pretty green field with a handsome man kneeling beside her.
- She thinks she might be dead, because this place seems heavenly and looks like the world she expected to find at age sixteen when she stood looking down the railroad tracks into a bright future.
- Dagny tells the man that she never had to take it all seriously and he agrees.
- They smile at each other.
- Then Dagny starts getting her bearings and realizes that she doesn't know where she is and she doesn't know this guy.
- He introduces himself: it's John Galt. Finally!
- He tells Dagny she's in the Taggart Terminal and she's confused.
- Dagny is injured but not too badly, so Galt picks her up and carries her off so they can go find her a doctor.
- While he's carrying her, Dagny realizes that John Galt is mad hot, and he's the guy she's been looking for - her one true love.
- He explains that she's in a secret valley that has a heat shield thing that protects it from prying eyes (but apparently not renegade airplanes).

- She hears Richard Halley's *Fifth Concerto* and he tells her that Halley himself is here, and that's him playing the piano in his house.
- They reach a hill and look down into the valley. There's a little town with a giant dollar sign hanging above it. Is this a secret Las Vegas?
- Galt says the dollar sign was Francisco's idea of a joke. Yeah, we believe that.
- Dagny can't believe Francisco lives here, and Galt says he has a house but he isn't around that much. Too busy stalking Hank and Dagny, apparently.
- A car pulls up and two older men get out.
- It's Hugh Akston and Midas Mulligan! This is nuts.
- Dagny wonders if she's on drugs.
- They men are stunned to see her - no one has ever busted into the valley uninvited before. Silly guys: this is Dagny Taggart, master of the Grand Entrance.
- Akston lets slip that John Galt is the inventor of Dagny's magical motor.
- She is overwhelmed with the craziness.
- Dagny learns that everyone in the valley has been waiting for her and Hank Rearden to arrive.
- They all pile into Mulligan's car, and we learn that the valley is his land.
- As they drive down the hill, Dagny sees Ellis Wyatt and flips out.
- Ellis runs up and is thrilled to see Dagny. Alas, he can't grab her and swing her around like he did on the opening day of the John Galt Line, since she's injured (remember?).
- Ellis is stunned to hear that Dagny got there by crashing her plane. He thought she'd just agreed to join Team Galt.
- They arrive at Galt's house and he carries Dagny inside. She asks if she's a prisoner and he says no, it's her choice.
- Dagny questions Galt about everything she's just seen and heard and he confirms it.
- He quotes her words about the destroyer back to her and she asks how long and how well he's been watching her.
- Dr. Hendricks, a famous surgeon, comes to treat Dagny. She has some bruises and busted ribs and a sprained

ankle. He patches her up and goes on his merry way.

- John asks how Dagny ended up crashing, so she explains.
- He fills her in on life in the valley. We learn that Galt's magical motor powers the whole place and that most people here work rather menial jobs, since it's a small, self-supporting community. Lawrence Hammond now runs a grocery store. Dagny is confused by this.
- He says he'll give her the grand tour and calls Mulligan to rent his car. Rent? John explains that no one borrows anything here, you have to pay or trade for everything.
- The first stop on the Welcome to Atlantis Tour is Quentin Daniels. Quentin is super excited to be there and freaks out about Dagny. He feels awful for leaving like he did and is worried that Dagny got seriously injured chasing after him.
- She assures him she's fine now.
- Daniels says that he's been hired as the janitor at the power plant, where he can be sort of a physics apprentice to Galt.
- On with the Welcome to Atlantis Tour. Next up is Dwight Sanders of Sanders Aircraft.
- He works as a farmer now and he is happy to see Dagny.
- He jokes about her crashing one of his airplane models.
- He then tells her that Sanders Aircraft still exists, since it's in his mind. He's been working to make farming in the valley more efficient so that he'll have more time to pursue his personal interests and passions, like designing airplanes.
- She learns that everyone pays for stuff with gold in the valley and they all use the Mulligan Bank.
- Next we meet Dick McNamara, the contractor who quit when Dagny was trying to build the John Galt Line.
- McNamara is the utilities man, and his staff consists of an economics professor and a history professor who are both really quite good at their new jobs.
- McNamara asks Dagny who the real traitors are - the ones who left or the ones who kept working in the looters' system.
- Dagny is a bit peeved and they drive off. Galt says he's going to show her all the men he's taken away from her.

- Next stop on the Welcome to Atlantis Tour is a nice woman who is the local fishwife. She's also a writer.
- The Tour continues. We now arrive at Ellis Wyatt's place. She's shocked to see the young brakeman from Chapter 1 there - the one who was whistling the *Fifth Concerto*.
- The brakeman now works for Ellis at the new Wyatt Oil in the valley, but he's really a musician and studies with Richard Halley.
- Ellis then speechifies. He says he's manufacturing time for himself in the valley. He's working for himself alone, but the work he does makes life easier for everyone there. Everyone cooperates to make life easier and to have more time to live a full life with lots of interests and people.
- The Welcome to Atlantis Tour continues. We now meet up with Andrew Stockton, who still runs a foundry. He explains that he put his predecessors out of business when he arrived and they now work for him. He says when Hank Reardon arrives he'll probably go out of business, but he'll gladly work for Hank. He'll have even more time for himself, since Hank will probably do a more efficient job than him.
- Ken Danagger comes over. He's working on mining iron now, and they chat a bit.
- The tour continues, and Dagny is amazed to see all these well-known people. She is also surprised that everyone recognizes her and waves.
- Galt tells her they've been expecting her for a long time.
- After a while they come to Francisco's house and Dagny makes Galt stop the car. She has a moment.
- Galt admits that he knows about their past relationship. Francisco never actually told him, but he guessed.
- They arrive at the powerhouse. Galt won't show her the inside, though.
- Above the door is the pledge that everyone who enters the valley must take: "I swear by my life, and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."
- Thus concludes the Welcome to Atlantis Tour. We hope your mind was sufficiently scrambled, and be careful while exiting the vehicle.

- Ahem. So Dagny goes back to Galt's house to take a nap.
- When she wakes up that evening, they head off for a dinner party at Mulligan's house.
- When she enters, Mulligan introduces her as Taggart Transcontinental.
- Who's at this shindig? Ellis, Ken, Akston, Dr. Hendricks, Quentin, Mulligan, Judge Narragansett, and Richard Halley.
- Dagny has a fangirl moment over Halley.
- They all talk to Dagny and tell her to take her time thinking things over.
- Ken tells her she's done a good job and she should rest now; she doesn't have to fight the looters alone anymore. This makes her cry.
- Everyone has dinner casually in the living room, and Dagny questions everyone about why they "quit" and what they are doing now.
- Everyone says they are still involved in the professions they had in the outside world, and then Galt tells her the big truth: they are all on strike.
- Galt then speechifies for a bit. He says they are all on strike against the looters' system, which has bad values that go against the individual and the individual mind. He says they are on strike because the looters try to use their morals and minds for bad purposes and to chain them, through a sense of guilt and obligation.
- Galt says his philosophy is one that celebrates life, not living death, and that his strike is to show the looters who really supports the world and what the looters' value system will bring them: death and destruction.
- The guests now all tell Dagny why they went on strike.
- Akston: quit because he couldn't work with professors and intellectuals who preached against reason and said that men were stupid animals.
- Mulligan: quit over the Twentieth Century Motors Factory case, where he was forced to give a loan to that loser guy.
- Judge Narragansett: quit over the same case, cause he saw the law was meaningless in the looters' world.
- Richard Halley: quit when he realized that the public held artists in contempt and expected him to suffer for nothing

then be grateful for what attention he did get from people who didn't really understand his music.

- Dr. Hendricks: quit when medicine went under state control and became a corrupt and poorly run system.
- Ellis, Quentin, and Ken confirm why they quit and say they joined the strike for the reasons that Galt outlined.
- John Galt says he went on strike because he is against the idea of original sin - that people are all born sinners. He says he thinks people have noble potential and refuses to participate in a value system that implies otherwise.
- He says he abandoned his motor out of love.
- We next hear the story of how the strike began. Galt started by recruiting his two best friends, then they all went out separately to look for potential fellow strikers.
- Galt recruited Akston first, then William Hastings. Richard Halley and Mulligan soon followed. Hastings took a year to decide whether or not to join, but finally did.
- Mulligan already owned the valley, so they began setting it up as a private retreat. As more people joined the strike, it gradually grew into a functioning town.
- It used to be a summer vacation spot, but the Colorado guys all had to come live there full-time since the government was after them.
- Now a lot of the strikers live in the valley full-time. The strike will end when the looters' code collapses.
- The valley is called Galt's Gulch, but Dagny says she'll call it Atlantis, and Galt seems to approve of this.
- Later that night Dagny gets ready for bed. She's staying in Galt's guest room, which is known as the Anteroom. It's the room where everyone stays their first night in the valley. There are messages of support scrawled into the walls from people like Ken and Ellis.
- Galt tells Dagny he never intended for her to occupy the room and says good night.

Volume 3, Chapter 2

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, John Galt, Francisco d'Anconia, Ragnar Danneskjöld, Midas Mulligan, Judge Narragansett, Ellis Wyatt, Andrew Stockton, Dick McNamara, Kay Ludlow, Hugh Akston, Dwight Sanders, Lawrence Hammond, Quentin Daniels, Richard Halley, Dr. Hendricks

Summary

The Utopia of Greed

- Dagny gets up and decides to fix breakfast.
- Suddenly someone bursts in: it's Ragnar!
- He is stunned to see Dagny and she fills him in on her plane crash
- Ragnar asks after Francisco and is surprised to learn that he isn't in the valley.
- John then comes in and formally introduces the two. Dagny is surprised to be meeting a super hot Viking pirate.
- We learn that Ragnar is one of Galt's BFFs, the other one being Francisco. The three of them always have breakfast together every year on June 1, and Francisco has never missed it.
- But they say Dagny can be his stand-in this year and sit down to eat.
- Ragnar starts chatting about his pirate adventures and mentions Hank Rearden, which upsets Dagny.
- Galt tells him to shut up and Ragnar is confused.
- Then he tells Dagny about how she, like Hank, is one of his "clients," and he fills her in on all the stuff he told Hank earlier.
- Ragnar then says he's off to see his wife. He's married to

the famous actress Kay Ludlow.

- Dagny is surprised they are married since he's off pirating all the time, but Ragnar says it's cool and they earn their time together.
- John informs Dagny that she'll be staying in the valley for a month like everyone else, since it's vacation time.
- He says he'll charge her room and board but Dagny says she'd rather work instead. She offers to work as Galt's housemaid. Galt bursts out laughing at this and says she's hired.
- Scene cut! On Dagny's third day in the valley, a plane arrives with all the strikers who still live in the outside world. Owen Kellogg is with them and freaks when he sees Dagny.
- Everyone in the outside world thinks she died in the plane crash.
- Owen says he contacted Eddie and Hank like she asked and says that Hank sounded devastated.
- Dagny is super upset about this.
- She asks John if she can send Hank a message and he says no. It's against valley rules apparently: no contact with the outside world.
- Dagny complies with this and drops the subject.
- Later at John's house, a tired-looking Francisco knocks on the door. He says he can't stay long because he has to keep looking for Dagny.
- John tells him to come in. When he sees Dagny, Francisco flips out.
- He runs up, falls to his knees, and grabs her. John leaves them alone.
- Epic confession time! Francisco tells Dagny everything: his role in the strike, why he joined, and how he still loves her. Francisco joined the strike for her sake, because he didn't want her to have to live in a horrible world that took advantage of her. He says he'll always love her and understands that she needed to move on and that he's happy that they can be friends again.
- It's a Kleenex-worthy spiel and Dagny starts crying.
- She tries to apologize to Francisco for everything he's gone through but he won't hear it and says everything is

great now. He was fighting for a good cause before, so it's cool.
- They kiss and then go out to see John.
- Francisco fills John in on the search for Dagny's plane. He says the outside world is flipping out over her presumed death.
- Galt apologizes to Francisco for the beating he's taken over the years and Francisco laughs him off.
- Galt is watching Dagny this whole time.
- Scene cut! Dagny is hanging out with Francisco at his house. He tells her all about his hopes for the future and how he plans to rebuild d'Anconia Copper and make it great. Dagny feels like she's recaptured her youth with him.
- But Dagny is starting to fall really hard for Galt, and she's conflicted about it.
- She gets jealous, which she never has been before, when Galt keeps disappearing every night. But it turns out Galt is giving physics lectures in town. Summer in the valley is the time when everyone shows off their work, so there are lots of lectures, performances, concerts, etc.
- Dagny is impatient for him to return one night and she falls asleep waiting.
- She wakes up to find him watching her, and he lets slip that he's wondered what she looks like when she's asleep. Creepy!
- In a confessional mood, John tells her he saw her for the first time ten years ago, then describes it in extreme detail.
- But he also tells her she's his worst enemy in the outside world, along with Robert Stadler. She can do him the most damage.
- Dagny asks if he wants to keep her in the valley, and he says more than anything.
- It's an epic stalker love story!
- They go to their separate bedrooms. Dagny really wants to sleep with him, but restrains herself. She hears Galt up pacing and realizes he's having the same problem.
- Scene cut! Richard Halley is giving Dagny a private performance.

- It's a fangirl dream come true!
- He thanks her when he's done and explains that he's a trader and that Dagny's understanding and love for his music are the best payment he could ask for. Aw.
- Halley then speechifies about how he wants his art to be experienced and appreciated by worthy people, which is why he won't perform in the outside world anymore.
- Dagny realizes that the businesses are like art and art is like business in the valley.
- She makes the rounds and chats with the valley residents.
- Kay Ludlow performs in a play and it's fantastic.
- When she isn't acting, Kay works at a diner in town.
- She tells Dagny that she quit because she didn't want to use her talent to act in trashy, stupid movies in the real world.
- Dagny then meets a young mother with two sons who came with her husband, an economics professor working for McNamara.
- One evening Hugh Akston invites her over for a dinner party. The other guests are Kay, Ragnar, Francisco, and John. It's a family party.
- Akston tells Dagny about his three students, who were like sons to him. They were all brilliant. All of them double majored in philosophy and physics, which was seen as an odd combo, and they were the favorites of him and Stadler.
- He interrupts his narrative to tells Ragnar not to sit on the ground since it's wet. It's hilarious. Dr. Akston is a cute little dad.
- Back to his flashback-o-rama. He says that Francisco planned to go into business, John wanted to be an inventor, and Ragnar wanted to be a philosopher.
- Akston then tells Dagny to watch out for people who believe the world is a place of evil, because they reap what the sow.
- He then tells her he's proud of his three "sons" and calls her Dagny for the first time.
- He nods at Galt, who looks surprised and pleased. Akston just gave him his blessing to have a relationship with Dagny, and treated her as part of the family.

- Good times.
- Scene cut! Francisco is showing John and Dagny his first copper mine in the valley.
- They all start chatting and Dagny's railroad genius kicks in and she starts making plans for a track in the valley.
- The men are thrilled.
- Then Dagny cuts herself off and says she can't let go of Taggart Transcontinental just yet.
- They are understanding and say she has a week left to decide.
- Francisco lets slip that John sent him after Dagny at Woodstock.
- He walks off to answer a question from a miner and Dagny confronts John about this.
- John says it was fair and he wanted to give Francisco a shot to win her back. He didn't know about Hank at the time.
- Francisco then comes back and asks Dagny to stay with him for the week.
- Dagny gives some lame excuse about being Galt's employee and he agrees that she should stay with him and keep earning her wages. Francisco is like, whatever, and leaves.
- Galt tells Dagny that she shouldn't worry about love-triangle antics and that their value system is one of honesty.
- Later Dagny is buying groceries at Hammond's store when the see a plane circling the valley.
- It's Hank's plane.
- Dagny flips out and runs off to watch the plane. She yells to Hank and then cries for a while.
- Scene cut. Tomorrow is Dagny's final day and Mulligan asks for her decision.
- She asks to have until tomorrow and the guys at Mulligan's house all give her advice and a pep talk.
- Galt then reveals that he's going back to the real world as usual.
- Mulligan is shocked and says that there's no need to go anymore, since the only two people left out there who matter are Dagny and Hank. Mulligan starts going on

about how dangerous the world is going to get, probably in an attempt to convince Dagny not to go back.
- But then Mulligan says the Taggart Bridge will probably collapse soon. Dagny shouts out that it won't.
- The party comes to a screeching halt and they all stare at her.
- Dagny says she's going back. While she holds the same values as them, she thinks that the looters' system is going to collapse soon, and she wants to be out there fighting them until they do. She also thinks there's still hope for the vast majority of people out there, and she wants to fight for them.
- They are all sorry to see her go, but Akston says he respects her decision and the fact that she's acting on her convictions.
- They all give her parting advice and tell her that she must not come looking for the valley again.
- Later she goes to have a drink at Francisco's house with Francisco and John.
- Francisco says he knows about their growing feelings for each other and gives them his blessing.
- Later still, at John's house, Dagny makes a little speech. She tells him that she's fighting her battle for him, in an attempt to win back the world that is rightfully his. She basically lets him know, in a subtle way, that he's the man she's been searching for her whole life, and that she loves him.
- We'd be down with all of this, but what about Hank?
- John accepts her decision to leave and tells her that soon she'll learn that she doesn't need to fight the whole world by herself.
- Scene cut. The next day John flies Dagny out of the valley and drops her off near a train station in Colorado. She watches his plane fly away till it's out of sight.

Volume 3, Chapter 3

Characters Involved

Dr. Stadler, Dr. Ferris, Dagny Taggart, Hank Rearden, Miss Ives, James Taggart, Eddie Willers, Bertram Scudder, Lillian Rearden

Summary

Anti-Greed

- Callback time! The title of this chapter is a reference to a line that Gwen Ives said way, way back.
- Robert Stadler is in Iowa and is wondering why.
- Dr. Ferris tells him he's here to witness a historic occasion: Project X is being unveiled and tested today.
- Ferris spouts off some rhetoric and runs off to talk to some reporters.
- There are tons of Washington people and journalists milling around near bleachers set up in an empty field.
- In the distance is a farmhouse with some goats milling around.
- Stadler feels nervous for some reason.
- Radio speeches begin. A radio broadcast will cover the test live.
- Without warning, Ferris drags Stadler onstage and shoves a microphone in his face. He tells the audience that Stadler is responsible for Project X and says he'll answer questions.
- Stadler doesn't know what Project X is. He hesitates for a moment but then starts saying meaningless things about how great Project X is. Failure.
- Ferris then gives a speech before the test starts.
- Project X is an experiment using sound waves - a weapon that will make America secure from its enemies.
- The audience members on the bleachers are given

binoculars so they can watch the farmhouse.

- As Ferris speaks, Stadler watches the goats frolic about and eat grass.
- There's a cute baby goat with its mother.
- Ferris rambles on and on disturbingly and Stadler notices that the goats are tied to stakes in the ground. Then is not boding well.
- Project X will now be renamed the Thompson Harmonizer. It will be a machine of peace and security.
- Stadler is still watching the goats.
- The machine is turned on and the test begins.
- Run, goats, save yourselves!
- Within an instant the farmhouse is blown to smithereens and the goats are tossed in the air and killed.
- The audience is totally freaked out, and then things get even more disturbing. All of them are hauled up to the radio microphone to tell the world how wonderful Project X is and how they witnessed a great thing today.
- Stadler pulls Ferris aside to confront him and they argue about the nature of science and modern politics. Ferris tells Stadler to get with the program. Everything is about power now, and this machine means that they have power.
- Stadler is then handed a written statement and reads it into the radio microphone. He talks about how proud he is of his project.
- Scene cut! Dagny is back in the real world and feeling totally disoriented.
- She makes her way to an airport. On the way she sees an ad Hank Rearden placed offering a huge reward if someone can find out exactly what happened to her.
- At the airport Dagny finds a reporter and tells him she's alive and to get out the news.
- Dagny's story is that she was injured in the plane crash. A couple rescued her but they didn't have a car or a phone so she had to wait and heal before she could hike to find transportation.
- She tires to call Hank but gets Miss Ives instead. Miss Ives is thrilled that Dagny is all right and says that Hank is out searching for her. Dagny leaves him a message at his

hotel.

- The hotel switchboard puts her through to Hank, who gets the shock of his life when he hears her on the phone.
- Hank is overcome with emotion. Dagny says she'll explain it all later and that she'll see him soon in New York.
- Dagny makes it home and heads to her office. Eddie is glad to see her.
- There's a man named Cuffy Meigs there running things. He looks like a thug and acts like a fool.
- She ignores him and Eddie fills her in on how bad things are now.
- James comes to see her and is less than exuberant about her being alive.
- But he is relieved that she is back, since James is inept.
- James discusses the new Railroad Unification Plan that pooled all the railroads together. Basically the bigger ones have now stolen tracks from smaller railroads and are using them for free.
- James has freakout number 922 and yells about how none of this is his fault and how people are panicking and the country is going to pieces Which isn't his fault. At all. He's just saying.
- He spouts off some rhetoric and Dagny finally throws him out.
- Then Lillian Rearden comes to see her. This is turning out to be the worst homecoming ever.
- Lillian gets right down to the blackmailing. If Dagny doesn't give a radio address tonight to reassure the country, Lillian will spill the beans about her affair with Hank. Then she tells her why Hank signed the Gift Certificate.
- Dagny is not happy, but says she'll do the radio address and tells Lillian to go away. Lillian, we feel that you are about to get owned.
- Scene cut. Dagny is at the radio station with our favorite angry journalist, Bertram Scudder.
- Scudder is rambling about how great Dagny is and how she's going to reassure everyone.
- Dagny is on. In more ways than one. She kicks things off by saying that she's going to tell everyone the truth about

the government and the economy. Then she admits that she had an affair with Hank Reardon for years and that she's not ashamed of it. In fact, she's proud of it. She says Hank was blackmailed into cooperating with the government. Then they pull the plug on her speech.

- Everyone in the studio is freaking out hilariously.
- Dagny just walks out and takes a cab home. The cabbie tells her good job on the radio.
- Hank then comes to see Dagny. We think this will be painful.
- Hank takes a page out of Francisco's book and makes an Epic and Noble Declaration of Love and Forgiveness. It's Kleenex-box worthy.
- Dagny runs up to Hank and they embrace. She starts sobbing and he calms her down.
- Dagny tries to apologize for what Hank suffered, and Hank says it was nothing compared to what he let her go through during her radio address.
- He then says he loves her and tells her all about his epiphany and how he realized his values had gotten messed up. He explains the emotional journey he's been on and tells her that he needs forgiveness from Francisco for what he did.
- Then he tells Dagny that he's sorry for what he put her through and for everything she had to deal with from him during their affair.
- Hank tells her that the first step for the New and Improved Hank Rearden is to tell her he loves her. He says he understands that she moved on while she was gone.
- Dagny confesses that she's met the man she's been searching for all her life. Hank says it's all OK and that he knows they'll always love each other. He's happy just to have Dagny in his life.
- Dagny then tells Hank in vague terms about her time in Galt's Atlantis. He guesses a lot and realizes that all their friends are safe somewhere. Hank says he's not ready to leave yet and that he and Dagny will hang in there as a team.
- Dagny thinks about Galt and believes that she'll probably

never see him again.

Volume 3, Chapter 4

Characters Involved

James Taggart, Cherryl Brooks, Dagny Taggart, Lillian Rearden

Summary

Anti-Life

- James is walking home from a meeting with some crooked businessmen from South America, headed up by a Señor Rodrigo Gonzales.
- These people are really violent and James is depressed. There seem to be more and more criminals in power now.
- He's hammered out a deal to take kickbacks from the Argentine government after they nationalize d'Anconia Copper.
- Orren Boyle is turning into an alcoholic.
- James has a panic attack on the way home and feels like the world is falling apart.
- When he gets home he sees Cherryl.
- He brags that he closed a big deal but Cherryl seems to not care.
- He tries to get an emotional response out of her, but she gives him nothing.
- James is off and running now, though, bragging about how great he is, defending himself, talking about how awful his fellow businessmen are, etc.
- He asks if she wants him to buy her something nice. She says no and he gets angry.
- He reveals that d'Anconia Copper will be nationalized on September 2. Cherryl observes that this is their wedding anniversary.
- Cherryl then comments that she thought Dagny's radio broadcast was wonderful. James yells at her for that and

says the fallout from it was awful, but at least Bertram Scudder got it and not him.
- Cherryl asks why they punished Bertram and not Dagny, and James has no answer.
- James fills her in on the Washington factions and the backstabbing. Then he blows up at Cherryl, asking how she can be so naive and comparing her to Eddie Willers.
- We get a lengthy flashback of Cherryl's married life:
- Cherryl's mantra is "don't get scared, but learn." She struggles to understand James and his wealthy world and desperately wants to make herself worthy of him.
- After a while, Cherryl grows more confident in James's world and manages to make it through a party without a major faux pas. James is furious and says she embarrassed him, which greatly confuses her.
- She grows increasingly disillusioned and begins to doubt James.
- One night James gets angry at her questions and tells her that love is faith and he wants her to love him. She doesn't understand what he's asking from her and she grows more concerned.
- So she starts asking around at Taggart Transcontinental and finally talks to Eddie, who tells her that Dagny is the brains of the outfit and the one worth admiring.
- Cherryl confronts James about this, and James gets verbally abusive and calls her ungrateful.
- She admits she doesn't understand him and doesn't get why he married her or what he wants from her. Everything she does just upsets him.
- Cherryl continues to observe her world and becomes more and more aware of how bad the values that govern it are.
- Back to the present: Cherryl point-blank asks James what he wants from her, and he says love.
- James defines love as being loved for himself but not for anything he does, says, thinks, etc.
- Cherryl wonders what his self even is.
- She then asks if he wants love to be causeless. She suddenly realizes that James wants to be great without actually doing anything, and that he preys on people's spirits.

- She's horrified. He tells her to shut up and orders her to have a drink with him.
- When she says no, he throws his glass down and tells her to go to hell, then storms off.
- Cherryl is in shock. She gets her coat and leaves.
- Scene cut. Dagny worked super late in her office that night. She's now at her apartment She's exhausted and torn between her convictions and her longing to just go back to Atlantis and hide.
- Cherryl then comes in. She tells Dagny that she's learned a lot in the past few months and wants to apologize to Dagny for what she said at the wedding.
- Dagny is kind to her and tells her to stop calling her Miss Taggart. She insists they are sisters through their own choosing, not through James.
- Dagny tells Cherryl she wants to help her, and Cherryl confesses all the things she's realized.
- Dagny fills Cherryl in on her own philosophy about how people are heroic individuals. She tells her not to give in to the bad people or let them break her spirit.
- Cherryl says she thinks she's too weak to fight anymore and feels the world is just dissolving. She says she wants to regain the sense of life she had in childhood but doesn't know how.
- Dagny begs Cherryl to stay with her overnight but Cherryl insists she'll be fine at home and just needs to think for a while.
- Dagny makes Cherryl promise to come talk to her again soon and Cherryl leaves.
- Scene break. James is sulking at home when Lillian Rearden shows up.
- She's looking pretty rough since Hank walked out on her.
- Lillian asks James to help her stop her divorce from going through. She's desperate for some sort of victory over Hank.
- James is snobby to her and says he can't help her since she's not important enough for the Washington crowd to care about. He says he'd like to help but the stakes are high now, and he can't get anyone to do a favor without a good reason.

- James and Lillian get drunk together and James brags about his d'Anconia Copper scheme. Lillian is duly appreciative.
- Then they sleep together and it's very awkward and mean-spirited.
- Scene cut. Cherryl arrives home and hears James speaking with a woman in his bedroom. She realizes what this means and runs to hide in her room.
- After Lillian leaves, Cherryl comes out to confront James.
- James goes on the rant to end all rants. He says he slept with "Mrs. Hank Rearden," and that everyone has affairs and she's stupid to expect otherwise. He then says he won't let her get a divorce and confesses that he married her because she was poor and pathetic and he thought she'd love and worship him accordingly.
- Cherryl is crying but manages to question him about this, and he screams at her more.
- She finally accuses him of being nothing better than a killer who goes after people's souls. He slaps her, knocking her down.
- Cherryl gets up and runs out blindly into the street.
- She is desperate to escape and doesn't know how she can go on fighting anymore because the whole world is like James.
- She feels that Dagny is fighting all alone and won't be able to hold out forever. They're all doomed.
- Cherryl stumbles around in a daze and eventually sees a women's shelter. She won't go in, though, because she knows they'll ask what she did: drugs, pregnancy, stealing, prostitution, etc. They'll instantly assume Cherryl is a bad person, which freaks Cherryl out even more.
- Cherryl takes off running and wonders desperately where all the decent people have gone; she feels there are practically none left in the whole world.
- A social worker grabs her arm and lectures her about what a disgrace it is to be wandering around drunk.
- Cherryl screams in horror, takes off running, and throws herself into the river.

Volume 3, Chapter 5

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, James Taggart, Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, John Galt, Philip Rearden, Cuffy Meigs

Summary

Their Brothers' Keeper

- It's September 2. We get a rundown of disasters. Materials are hard to come by and things are breaking down all over the place.
- People are starving and the government is mismanaging everything and handing out favors. They are seizing things from one state and hauling them to another, and everyone is getting screwed over somehow.
- James has been hanging around Dagny more and more since Cherryl's death. He seems desperate for some sort of absolution, even though he won't admit that Cherryl's suicide was his fault.
- Dagny is disgusted with him and feels he's plotting to stab her in the back soon.
- James has a meeting with Dagny and yells at her for being uncooperative since she got back from wherever she was.
- Dagny tells James that he and his looter friends should just quit.
- James yells some more and says everything is Dagny's fault cause she should be taking care of him. He's weaker than her and she's not doing her job.
- Dagny calls him a bastard and tries to leave, but he insists she stay a while longer because there's a news broadcast he wants her to hear.
- It's a report from Santiago: we learn that d'Anconia Copper was nationalized, and at the instant the vote

passed, all of its property was simultaneously blown up.
- So d'Anconia Copper is no more. James has a melt-down.
- Dagny leaves and has a celebratory dinner with Hank.
- They've been meeting and having dinner in public whenever he's in New York. People always stare at them now.
- The two discuss Francisco.
- She tells him she's met Ragnar, and they smile, knowing he was responsible for the explosions.
- Dagny then tells Hank that Francisco is one of the destroyer's "agents," and Hank confesses he's glad to know they sent someone to him the night Ken Danagger quit.
- We learn that there's a food crisis brewing: if farmers in Minnesota aren't able to finish their harvest and distribute their food throughout the country, there will be a famine this winter.
- Hank and Dagny says they'll work to save the country at least for one more winter.
- They look outside and see that the giant calendar on top of the building (remember, all the way back from Chapter 1?) has a message appearing on it.
- The message says: "Brother, you asked for it! Signed, Francisco d'Anconia." Hank bursts out laughing.
- Scene cut! Copper wires keep breaking, which is bad since there is no more copper.
- Dagny is struggling to make sure Minnesota has trains.
- Hank, meanwhile, is being courted by Washington, which sets off alarm bells for him.
- Philip comes in and asks Hank for a job.
- Hank says no, he won't just hire Philip out of charity, because Philip is useless.
- They debate for a long time. Hank pits his individualist values against Philip's looter values, which say that Hank is obligated to help him since they are brothers and Hank is stronger.
- Philip starts to threaten Hank with Washington intervention, but he backs down, realizing that he's scared of Hank and the steel mills. He leaves.
- Hank's divorce trial goes smoothly and he is a free man now.

- His attorney warns Hank to watch out because his trial went way too smoothly. It's suspicious.
- We get a scene with the Wet Nurse, who asks Hank for an honest job at the mills. Hank refuses him, saying the Wet Nurse would get in big trouble with Washington and he's glad the Wet Nurse sort of has his back there. The Wet Nurse confirms that something is afoot in Washington and tells Hank to be careful.
- New scene. We track a series of malfunctions and Dagny has to keep shifting supplies from one station or track to another in a desperate juggling act.
- Meanwhile, the government has dumped money into a soybean project that the late Kip Chalmers's mother supports.
- Would-be mobster Cuffy Meigs still hangs around Dagny's office. He carries a gun on him.
- The giant calendar is blank now. They couldn't fix it after Francisco's prank.
- Dagny gets a call that warns her that Minnesota hasn't gotten the trains they need and the crops are all rotting.
- Dagny and Eddie practically kill themselves trying to get trains moving to Minnesota. The trains were off hauling soybeans and other silly things.
- Despite their best efforts, the harvest is ruined and the soybeans are harvested too early. The country's food supply is destroyed.
- Scene cut. Dagny is at a fancy dinner business meeting with a bunch of looters: Ferris, Mouch, Meigs, James, Mr. Weatherby (whose first name is Clem), Lawson. It's the worst party ever.
- Dagny feels overdressed for the occasion and is uncomfortable in her pretty dress.
- The looters complain and spout off rhetoric, just like in every other scene ever featuring them.
- Dagny has a realization: these people are trying to turn back the clock to a time when people ran things by force and made everyone slaves. Dagny can't quite believe it.
- She's then called away - there's a problem at the Taggart Terminal.
- She makes a run for it and finds out that the circuit that

controls all the signal lights is busted, and no one knows how to fix it.

- Dagny calls Chicago and has them send out their signal engineer, whom Dagny will pay out of her own pocket to fix the problem. He's the only decent engineer left, but he won't get there for a while.
- Dagny calls a company meeting and tells her employees that they're going to have to run the signals manually, like in the olden days. Workers will stand in the tunnels with lanterns and runners will pass messages to them letting them know what to do. It's depressing.
- Then Dagny spies a face she recognizes in the crowd of employees. It's John Galt!
- No wonder he was such a great stalker. Dagny realizes that he's been under her nose the whole time. She walks off to an out-of-the-way tunnel area and he follows her.
- They have sex on top of some sandbags.
- Afterward, John feels like speechifying. He confesses that he has been working at Taggart Transcontinental in a menial job for a decade and has been in love with Dagny, secretly watching her, the whole time.
- Is there anyone in this book who isn't in love with Dagny? Raise your hand.
- He also gives Dagny kudos on her radio speech and says he isn't jealous at all about her relationship with Hank.
- Dagny says she loves him.
- John then tells her they can't see each other until this is all over, one way or another, and either he or Dagny is proved right. He tells her not to look for him because she could put him in danger, since the looters would love to get their hands on him.
- If Dagny decides she is ready to join the strike, all she needs to do is draw a dollar sign on Nat Taggart's statue. At that signal, Galt will come whisk her away in 24 hours.
- They part, and Dagny is heartbroken to leave him.

Volume 3, Chapter 6

Characters Involved

Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, Wet Nurse, Lillian Rearden, Mrs. Rearden, Philip Rearden, Tinky Holloway, Dr. Ferris, Wesley Mouch, James Taggart, Eugene Lawson, Orren Boyle

Summary

The Concerto of Deliverance

- It's October and the Union of Rearden Steel workers has demanded a raise in wages.
- Trouble is brewing at the mills now.
- Hank gets a notice that his assets are frozen because of some income tax discrepancy three years ago. Hank's attorney is furious, but Hank says to not do anything.
- Then he gets a call from Washington apologizing about the mix-up but saying it will take a few days to clear it up. Seems like they are sending him a warning.
- Then Hank is called to a meeting in Washington by a guy named Tinky Holloway. We're hoping that's a nickname because...really.
- Tinky hangs up and talks with Claude Slagenhop. They're worried Hank won't go along with their latest scheme. We learn that Philip Rearden is working with them.
- It's November 4. Hank's mom begs him to come to the house - it's an emergency.
- Hank shows up to find his mom, Philip, and Lillian there. Just like old times.
- The emergency is that the family has no money, since their assets are still frozen.
- All of them beg Hank to show them some compassion. Finally Mama Rearden lets it slip that they're worried Hank will up and disappear like the other industrialists

and leave them up a creek without a paddle.

- Hank says that if they really cared about him they would tell him to run for it rather than have him stay and risk getting tossed in jail or something by the looters.
- Lillian then loses it and rants at Hank about how horrible he is and tells him that she slept with James Taggart before the divorce. Hank doesn't really care.
- Lillian seems to deflate and Hank leaves for Washington.
- Ferris, Lawson, James, Tinky Holloway, and Mouch are all there. This is even worse than Dagny's dinner party.
- The looters do their usual song and dance routine, and Hank tells them to get to the point already.
- Here's the deal: they want to pass a Steel Unification Plan. Sounds like a winner. They explain it all, and since Hank can actually do math, he tells them that under this plan he'll produce twice as much steel as Orren Boyle but will get paid less for what he produces, since some of his earnings will go to keep Orren afloat.
- Hank then speechifies about how the looters are illogical and how their values are destructive.
- Hank realizes that they won't do anything like shoot him because his fellow victims are all on strike and they really need him right now.
- He realizes then that these idiots think he's a miracle worker and can somehow save them and spare them having to actually do anything for themselves or rethink their ideals.
- So Hank walks out.
- He sees a fire when he nears the mills, but before he gets there, he swerves off the road to avoid hitting a person lying there.
- It's the Wet Nurse and he's been shot. There's a riot at the mills, staged by Washington as a way to get the Steel Unification Plan passed. The Wet Nurse saw what was going on and tried to warn Hank, but some goons at the mills shot him and tossed him in a ditch.
- Hank calls the Wet Nurse by his name for the first time: Tony.
- He tells Tony he did great and to hang on while they get him some help.

- But Tony dies soon after.
- Hank is furious on Tony's behalf and hates society for churning out kids who haven't been taught to think, who are only given meaningless phrases and ideology instead of good tools to live by.
- When Hank gets to the mills he's attacked and is hit in the head.
- The next thing he knows, he's in his office with a bandage on his head. A doctor says he'll be OK.
- Hank's superintendent tells him it's all under control and that the new foreman shot the thugs and saved Hank.
- Hank asks to see the foreman. Francisco walks in.
- They have a bonding moment, and Hank apologizes to Francisco. Francisco says there's no need and asks if Hank's ready to hear the rest of what he's wanted to tell him.
- Hank says yes and they talk in his office as the sun comes up.

Volume 3, Chapter 7

Characters Involved

John Galt, Dagny Taggart, Eddie Willers, Mr. Thompson, James Taggart

Summary

"This is John Galt Speaking"

- James bursts into Dagny's apartment to tell her that Hank has disappeared.
- Dagny starts laughing in triumph. She's happy for him.
- Then Dagny throws an increasingly grumpy James out.
- She wonders why she's so glad Hank got away and feels that he's right. She thinks winning is still a long shot, but she wants to be the only victim if things go wrong.
- Dagny thinks a lot about Hank and Atlantis.
- She gets a quick note from Hank telling her he's fine and that he's met Galt and understands why she's in love with him.
- Violence is getting worse across the country. Gangs are attacking government buildings and officials, and a civil war has broken out in California.
- President Thompson is going to make a radio address to the nation on November 22, and Dagny is invited. She agrees to go reluctantly.
- It's a Who's Who of the looters crowd at the broadcast studio.
- Eddie comes with her, which is good, cause she needs a wingman.
- When they get there some dudes try to shanghai Dagny into posing for some shots with President Thompson and Dr. Stadler, but she refuses.
- Everyone is pitching a fit about her refusal when a lackey

walks up and says there's something wrong with the radio and they might need to delay the broadcast.
- Everyone freaks some more.
- Every radio station in the country went off the air at the same time.
- Super weird.
- Suddenly a voice comes on the air. It's John Galt!
- He tells everyone to settle in cause he's going to speechify like he's never speechified before.
- So Galt proceeds to give a Grand Statement of his Personal Philosophy.
- OK, we won't be covering the speech in depth here, because we examine it more thoroughly elsewhere. Check out our Themes section for a discussion on Objectivism, John Galt's "Character Analysis," Francisco d'Anconia's "Character Analysis," Dagny Taggart's "Character Analysis," and the "Symbols, Allegory, Imagery" section. You can probably see why we're not summarizing this here. OK, back to the chapter.
- Galt talks for three hours. In a nutshell, his philosophy states that people are gifted with reason and the ability to use it; that people should live for themselves alone, and their own happiness; that everyone has free will and is responsible for him or herself alone; that a person's work and life choices reflect his or her values; and that the three most important values in life are reason, purpose, and self-esteem. Looters are all about need, sacrifice, pain as morality, and death. They don't live their lives, and they prey on other people like parasites.
- Galt pleads with people to wise up and accept his philosophy. He tells people to go on strikes of their own and not give the looters their minds. He tells the looters to watch out, because their days are numbered.
- At the end of his marathon address, Galt starts acting like he's giving an Oscar acceptance speech and starts thanking all the people who've helped him make it big.
- He gives a big shout-out to his best friends Ragnar and Francisco.
- Hank and Hugh Akston also get shout-outs.
- Robert Stadler gets a personal threat issued.

- And finally Galt tells the others out there who are still fighting the good fight that they've been awesome, but that now it's time to let go before they burn themselves out in the struggle. He then asks if his "love" heard that part. Dagny shout-out!

Volume 3, Chapter 8

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, Eddie Willers, John Galt, James Taggart, Mr. Thompson, Chick Morrison, Eugene Lawson, Wesley Mouch, Dr. Ferris, Dr. Stadler

Summary

The Egoist

- When Galt finishes, everyone is stunned. Either that or in a coma, we're not sure.
- President Thompson starts barking orders and trying to get everyone to chill.
- Hysteria is slowly rising.
- All the looters desperately try to convince themselves that either no one listened to it, or they didn't buy it.
- President Thompson asks what they should do, but no one answers.
- Dagny pipes up and says they should all stand aside and let Galt and his crew come fix things.
- Everyone says no way, but Thompson says it's not a bad idea. He says they'll find Galt and get him to work for them and help them out.
- Dagny rolls here eyes and leaves with Eddie.
- Stadler is starting to panic.
- Thompson tells Mouch to have Dagny watched day and night, since she seems like a Galt follower and might lead them to him.
- Scene break. Eddie is shocked and says that Galt is his Mystery Worker friend!
- For real, Eddie. No wonder Galt was such a fantastic Dagny-stalker all those years! He was getting the dirt from fellow Dagny-watcher Eddie.

- Dagny confesses she met Galt while she was away during her plane crash.
- She tells Eddie they can't look for him or it will put him in danger.
- Eddie asks if Dagny is going to leave and she says no. She says the looters' government will topple soon and she just has to hang in there a little longer.
- Scene break. The hunt for John Galt is on.
- The government took credit for the Galt speech, saying they wanted to present "unconventional" ideas for debate. They ask Galt to appear in person so they can continue the "conversation."
- The government tries for weeks to make Galt show himself. Thompson offers rewards and promises and practically starts begging Galt to come help them.
- Groups across the country start sending out pleas for John Galt to come "save them."
- Things are worsening and the country is getting more depressed and angry. No one trusts the government anymore.
- Steel production goes down the toilet with Hank gone, and his mills have to close.
- President Thompson keeps coming to Dagny for advice, and she just keeps telling him to step down.
- Finally Thompson hints that there's a violent faction gaining power - Ferris, Lawson, and Meigs - and that they want to send people to kill Galt.
- Dagny panics when she hears this.
- Scene cut! Dagny is in a slum. She tracked down Galt's address from the Taggart Transcontinental payroll. Galt is clearly not a super spy. Sydney Bristow never would have used her real address.
- Dagny goes up to Galt's apartment and is thrilled to see he's unharmed.
- John is thrilled to see Dagny, too, and he hauls her inside and embraces her.
- John tells Dagny she was probably followed. (Dagny doesn't have any spy skills either.) He tells her that they'll probably capture him now, but it's all OK, because he would have been kind of sad if Dagny hadn't sought him

out.
- Galt shows Dagny his secret lab, where he has another motor.
- There's a picture of Dagny cut out from a newspaper hanging on the wall. So sweet, yet so creepy.
- Galt tells Dagny she'll have to pretend to hate him and act like she turned him in to the government herself for money.
- Dagny agrees if it will keep them from hurting John and John says it will keep her safe, too, because otherwise they'd use her against him.
- Some goons bust in. Dagny announces that she's found John Galt and they should arrest him.
- Galt is hauled off.
- Scene cut. Galt is being held at the Wayne-Falkland Hotel.
- Mr. Thompson comes in and makes Galt an offer: they'll give him whatever he wants if he'll take over the economy and save them all.
- Galt refuses, which confuses Thompson.
- Galt insists that they can't give him anything that would tempt him to work for them.
- They talk in circles for a long time and Thompson gets increasingly confused and frustrated at Galt's refusal to cooperate. Galt explains himself but Thompson doesn't get it.
- Thompson finally leaves, frustrated. Galt shrugs and asks him, "Who is John Galt?" on his way out. Awesome.
- Scene cut.
- The looters are having a secret clubhouse meeting.
- None of them want to talk to Galt anymore cause he freaks them out with his overwhelming coolness and logic.
- Chick Morrison and Wesley Mouch offer up silly ideas like making Galt attend a mass public rally.
- Fred Kinnan, as usual, is the only one who tells the hard truth. He says they are going to lose because they can't offer anything to a man who really wants to live.
- James yells at him. Lawson yells back. Ferris makes a snotty remark. President Thompson yells at all of them to shut up, finally losing his cool.

- Thompson keeps calling Dagny over for conferences. She tricks Thompson into thinking that Galt is greedy and that what he really wants is money.
- Dagny is barely holding it together, but she keeps plugging away. She's turning into a good spy, too, fooling all the looters.
- Francisco sends her a note telling her to hang in there and they'll find a way to bust Galt out soon.
- A parade of looters comes by to try to get Galt to cooperate. Silly looters.
- James Taggart does his usual screeching routine, which probably isn't the best way to persuade someone to do something.
- James tries a moral tack and tells Galt that he has to help them to save people.
- Galt says the looters caused the problems that are killing people, so they should step down.
- James yells that Galt is an egoist. Galt says thank you.
- Mr. Thompson notices Galt has a dollar sign cigarette. Galt says it was an anonymous gift.
- Then Chick Morrison has a go. He asks Galt to take pity on them.
- Galt asks if they took pity on Hank, and Chick laughs at the thought.
- Galt gets peeved and Thompson quickly tells Chick to shut up, throwing him out.
- Ferris tries next. He flat-out tells Galt that he has the country's blood on his hands and vaguely threatens him.
- Thompson goes spastic and throws Ferris out.
- Thompson is still desperate to try the whole friend routine with John.
- Thompson asks if Galt would like to see anyone. He offers to send Dagny over.
- Galt says he hates Dagny, since she's his only failure.
- But Galt says he'd like to see Dr. Stadler.
- That night Thompson and Mouch are having dinner together. We learn that some raiders attacked a train and damaged the Taggart Bridge.
- Meanwhile, Eddie and Dagny are talking. California is in chaos and no Taggart trains can get out of San Francisco.

- Eddie says he'll go try to help out.
- Dagny wants him to stay, but Eddie says that if Taggart Transcontinental goes down, he's going with it.
- Eddie tells Dagny he's always loved her and says goodbye. It's really sad.
- Dr. Stadler comes to see John.
- Stadler shouts that it wasn't his fault and he couldn't help it. He then goes on a desperate and vicious rant against Galt, defending himself and damning Galt. Stadler finally insists that everyone can't be wrong, and that Galt is the one who should be destroyed.
- Galt sits silently the whole time. When Stadler is done he says that was exactly what he wanted to say to Stadler.
- Stadler leaves, freaking out.
- Scene break! Some goons come in and lead Galt away at gunpoint.
- He's taken to a banquet and made to sit, still at gunpoint, at a table with President Thompson. There are TV cameras.
- Dagny is in the audience sitting out of Galt's line of sight.
- Mr. Thompson then unveils his plan in front of a live television audience: it's the John Galt Plan for Peace, Prosperity, and Profit! He says Galt has agreed to help them out and will magically save the world.
- Chick Morrison is introduced as Galt's personal secretary.
- All the looters gives speeches and Galt just sits there.
- Dagny is horrified.
- Finally Galt stands up so that the TV cameras can see the gun held against his side. He tells everyone to get out of his way.

Volume 3, Chapter 9

Characters Involved

Dr. Stadler, Cuffy Meigs, Dagny Taggart, Mr. Thompson, Eddie Willers, John Galt, Wesley Mouch, Dr. Ferris, James Taggart, Francisco d'Anconia

Summary

The Generator

- Stadler has lost it. After Galt's declaration he hops in his car and is now frantically driving to Project X headquarters in Iowa.
- We learn that, hilariously, Mr. Thompson threatened to take Stadler hostage in order to pressure Galt, since Stadler was the only person he asked to see. Galt must secretly love him still.
- Stadler is having a breakdown and decides that he'll take over things at Project X with some vague notion of "showing" Galt who's right - so there.
- Project X HQ is called Harmony City, ironically enough.
- Something shifty is going on when Stadler arrives. There are armed men wandering around and the place looks kind of trashed.
- Stadler (Captain Oblivious) demands to speak to whomever's in charge.
- It's our favorite wannabe gangster, Cuffy Meigs. Cuffy has put a militia together and they have taken over Project X and plan to use the weapon against their various enemies.
- Stadler yells that he's crazy and doesn't even know how to properly work the machine.
- Cuffy Meigs says I'll show you! Famous last words.
- Cuffy, as it turns out, did not know how to operate the machine.

- He sets it off and blows up the entire Project X facility and everything else within a hundred-mile radius. The blast collapses the Taggart Bridge across the Mississippi. Everyone in the blast radius is now dead.
- Scene cut.
- Dagny is thrilled at how hardcore her boyfriend is. She follows the looters back to their conference/panic room. But then she learns that they are planning to torture Galt with something called the Ferris Persuader. Ferris is very gung-ho about the torture. They're taking Galt to the State Science Institute for the torture session.
- Dagny panics but pulls herself together and hightails it out of there.
- She runs to a phone booth and calls Francisco on the number he had given her in his note.
- She gives him the lowdown and he tells her to pack a bag and he'll come pick her up in forty minutes at the Taggart Terminal.
- Dagny goes back to her office to get some things and learns that the Taggart Bridge has been destroyed.
- She freaks for a moment but then forces herself to let it go. She walks out.
- In the terminal she grabs some lipstick and draws a dollar sign on Nat Taggart's statue.
- Then she walks up to Francisco and says the oath to be admitted into Atlantis.
- Francisco smiles and they walk out together.
- Scene cut.
- We're in a basement room at the State Science Institute, where Project F is located.
- Project F is a generator device that creates an electric current.
- James Taggart, Dr. Ferris, and Wesley Mouch are the only ones there with John Galt.
- Galt is hooked up naked to the machine and Ferris starts administering progressively worse electric shocks, ordering Galt to cooperate.
- Galt says nothing.
- Mouch is squeamish and breaks first, asking Ferris to stop.
- James is taking sadistic glee in the whole thing and Ferris

keeps going.

- But then the generator shuts down. The building is having power problems.
- A maintenance worker comes in and says he doesn't know how to fix it.
- Galt pipes up and tells him which wires to mess with to get the generator running again.
- Maintenance guy freaks out and runs away.
- James is yelling that they can't stop and then he stops and realizes what sort of monster he's become.
- He crumples and seems to go catatonic.
- Mouch and Ferris panic and haul James out of the room. Ferris tells Galt that they'll be back.

Volume 3, Chapter 10

Characters Involved

Dagny Taggart, John Galt, Francisco d'Anconia, Ragnar Danneskjöld, Hank Rearden, Eddie Willers

Summary

In the Name of the Best Within Us

- This chapter title is a reference way back to the first chapter, when Eddie recalls a childhood scene with Dagny. He'll say this line again later in the chapter.
- Dagny waltzes up to Project F's door and demands to be let in.
- The guard is like, go away crazy lady.
- Dagny says she's there on Mr. Thompson's order.
- The guard still says no.
- Dagny pulls out a gun.
- The guard says, I'm listening. Actually, the guard panics and says he has orders from Dr. Ferris, who is scary. But Dagny has a gun and is also scary. It's a dilemma.
- Dagny tells him to make a choice now.
- He says he can't.
- Dagny counts to three. Still no choosing. So she shoots him.
- She picks the keys off the body and opens the door.
- Francisco, Ragnar, and Hank pop out and follow her inside. Talk about the A Team in action.
- Francisco gets some people to show him where the other guards are and to give him the necessary keys.
- Ragnar, Hank, and Dagny come in to tie everyone up. The guards are freaked out, by Dagny especially. One of them hilariously wonders what a lady is doing with this highway gang.

- Hank goes up to the main lab where everyone else is and tells them to let him see the prisoner.
- Then Francisco, Ragnar, and Dagny dramatically appear in all the other doorways and everyone panics.
- One of the guards shoots and hits Hank in the arm. He's fine, though, nothing life-threatening.
- The group quickly subdues everyone.
- The rescuers then burst in to the cellar to free John.
- He's shaky but OK.
- Everyone's happy to be reunited and Ragnar destroys the generator before they leave.
- They get John his clothes and the group heads out to Francisco's plane.
- They all take off.
- Galt learns that practically everyone in Atlantis came out to serve as a second-wave rescue mission in case the first one didn't work.
- As they are flying back to Atlantis, New York City blacks out.
- The three longtime friends share a moment - their quest is over.
- Dagny and John have a little moment too.
- Then Galt gets on the radio and talks to a relieved Dr. Akston.
- Scene cut.
- Eddie Willers is riding back east on the Comet. He managed to get the trains moving out of California after a horrible couple of days in the middle of a war zone.
- But then the Comet stops.
- No one can figure out what's wrong.
- Eddie panics and feels a desperate need to keep the train moving.
- They call for help but no one answers and they are stranded in the middle of nowhere.
- Then a covered wagon train pulls up. It's the Oregon Trail!
- Actually it's scary: these people are refugees from California and they're taking the only means of transportation available in search of a new place to live.
- They tell everyone what happened to the Taggart bridge

and Eddie realizes that he'll never get back home to New York now. He's devastated.

- The wagon train people offer to give the shocked Comet passengers a ride, and some of them climb on board.
- Eddie refuses to leave, though. He stays alone and tries to fix the Comet, but it's hopeless.
- Eddie realizes now what the railroad always meant to Dagny and that their world was the "best within them" - it's what he was searching for in his youth.
- Eddie falls to the ground, sobbing in the dark next to the train.
- Scene cut.
- Back in Atlantis everyone is spending a peaceful night, making plans for their return to the real world.
- Halley is playing the piano. Mulligan is making plans for new banks. Kay and Ragnar are chilling at home quietly; Ragnar is reading Aristotle. Judge Narragansett is editing the U.S. Constitution to include free trade rights. Hank, Ellis, and Francisco are at Francisco's house making business plans. Francisco laughs in glee when they mention what Dagny will be working on, since he's so happy she's with them. And Dagny and John are standing outside watching the stars together.
- Galt traces a dollar sign in the sky.
- The end.

Plot Analysis - Table of Contents

Classic Plot Analysis

Booker's Seven Basic Plots Analysis: Overcoming the Monster

Three Act Plot Analysis

Classic Plot Analysis

Initial Situation

From the beginning until Hank and Dagny return from Wisconsin

During this stage we meet most of our major characters, and the main quests are put into motion: to build the John Galt Line to save Colorado and find the inventor of the motor.

Conflict

From Ellis Wyatt's disappearance until the closure of the John Galt Line

Our main heroes are faced with an increasing number of trials, both personal and professional. In this period more businessmen disappear and Dagny is unable to save the John Galt Line.

Complication

From the period where Directive 10-289 is passed until the collapse of the Taggart Tunnel in Colorado

Things seem really bleak here after the disastrous Directive is passed. Dagny quits only to be sucked back into things after the Taggart Tunnel disaster. Hank is meanwhile blackmailed into signing away the rights to his Metal because of his relationship with Dagny. All the major characters seem isolated and beaten here.

Climax

Dagny crashes her plane in Atlantis and learns the truth about John Galt

After an exciting plane chase and crash we get a lot of answers and shocking revelations while Dagny is in Atlantis with John

Galt and all the people who have disappeared.

Suspense

From Dagny's departure from Atlantis until Hank leaves for Atlantis

Dagny leaves Atlantis and all the book's major relationships are dramatically changed. Things get worse in the real world and after a lot of trials Hank finally goes to Atlantis, leaving Dagny alone.

Denouement

From John Galt's radio address until his capture and torture

Things start winding down once Galt delivers his radio address. The country's downfall is approaching and Dagny undergoes the last of her trials when Galt is captured. At the end of this stage, she finally decides to abandon her railroad.

Conclusion

From Galt's rescue until the end

Galt is saved and our heroes escape to Atlantis, though not without costs. New York blacks out, the country collapses, and Eddie Willers is left stranded in the wilderness.

Booker's Seven Basic Plots Analysis: Overcoming the Monster

Anticipation Stage and the Call

From the introduction of Eddie and his sense of doom through the period where the John Galt Line is built

In this stage we learn that something is very wrong, although what that is remains mysterious. We meet our main players and they all embark on a quest to save Colorado from economic destruction.

The Dream Stage

The John Galt Line opens successfully and Hank and Dagny explore their new relationship on a vacation. They also find a revolutionary motor and set out to find its inventor.

Things are more hopeful in this period after the success of Dagny's John Galt Line. Hank and Dagny start a relationship and embark on a new quest after they find the motor. However, dread still lurks in the background and soon enters the narrative again.

The Frustration Stage

Ellis Wyatt's disappearance until Dagny crashes her plane and learns of Galt's strike

Things go from bad to worse for our heroes here. People disappear and Hank and Dagny suffer increasing trials. Dagny crashes in Atlantis and has her world flipped upside down when she learns about the strike, which she bring herself to join just yet. Hank is also thrown off-kilter with a series of realizations about his personal life.

Nightmare Stage

From the time Dagny leaves Atlantis until Galt's torture

Things get worse for everyone after Dagny leaves Atlantis. Though she begins a relationship with Galt, they cannot be together. Hank finally leaves for Atlantis and Dagny suffers alone after Galt's capture. The country's downfall is fast approaching.

Thrilling Escape from Death and the Death of the Monster

From Galt's rescue until the end

Our heroes save Galt and escape to Atlantis as the country descends into chaos and darkness, signaling that the "looters" have been defeated.

Three Act Plot Analysis

Act I

Volume 1: from the introduction of our major players (Dagny and Hank) to the dramatic exit of Ellis Wyatt.

Act II

Volume 2 Colorado fails, things get worse, and Dagny's fate is uncertain after a dramatic plane crash.

Act III

Volume 3: we learn of the strike and meet John Galt. Romantic relationships are all readjusted and finalized and our heroes manage to escape as the country collapses.

Character Analysis - Table of Contents

John Galt

Dagny Taggart

Hank Rearden

Francisco d'Anconia

James Taggart

Eddie Willers

Robert Stadler

Lillian Rearden

Cherryl Brooks Taggart

Ragnar Danneskjöld

Hugh Akston

Ellis Wyatt

Jeff Allen

Mayor Bascom

Luke Beal

Orren Boyle

Laura Bradford

Bill Brent

Kip Chalmers

Dan Conway

Ken Danagger

The d'Anconias

Quentin Daniels

Balph Eubank

Dr. Floyd Ferris

Richard Halley

Lawrence Hammond

Pop Harper

Mr. and Mrs. William Hastings

Dr. Hendricks

Tinky Holloway

Lee Hunsacker

Gwen Ives

Gilbert Keith-Worthing

Owen Kellogg

Fred Kinnan

Paul Larkin

Eugene Lawson

Mort Liddy

Clifton Locey

Pat Logan

The Looters

Kay Ludlow

Dick McNamara

Cuffy Meigs

Dave Mitchum

Chick Morrison

Wesley Mouch

Mr. Mowen

Midas Mulligan

Judge Narragansett

Ben Nealy

The Newsstand Owner

Ted Nielsen

Betty Pope

Dr. Simon Pritchett

Mrs. Rearden

Philip Rearden

Dwight Sanders

Joe Scott

Bertram Scudder

Claude Slagenhop

The Starnes Family

Andrew Stockton

Mr. and Mrs. Taggart

Nathaniel "Nat" Taggart

Mr. Thompson

The Trainmaster

Lester Tuck

The Twentieth Century Motor Factory

Mr. Ward

Mr. Clem Weatherby

The Wet Nurse

Mark Yonts

The Young Brakeman

The Young Mother

Character Analysis: John Galt

Aka (also known as):

John, John Galt, Galt, Mystery Worker

Character Analysis

Who Is John Galt?
Seriously, we really want to know who this guy is. We get lots of wacky theories about his identity (he's living in an undersea city! he discovered the fountain of youth!) before finally meeting the mystery man in Volume 3. But this is an almost absurdly long time to delay introducing the hero of the novel. Which leads us to a few questions: why is Galt's introduction delayed so long, why is he so mysterious, and can he really even be classed as the book's hero, since he's MIA most of the time?

Well, we can tackle that last one right now. Galt may be MIA, but his presence is strongly felt throughout the novel. He's actually driving most of the action, albeit mysteriously and behind the scenes like a Phantom of the Opera. And that's actually an apt comparison, given his relationship with Dagny. But more on that later. At any rate, Galt is a hero in this novel, but not in a traditional sense.

There's still a lot to try to figure out here, so we'll start by at least getting a handle on who this guy is, and then move on to the hows and whys of the character.

National Man of Mystery
We get very little in terms of backstory for Galt. He has a tendency to disappear and then pop back up like a whack-a-mole. We know that he went to Patrick Henry University and was a bit of a superstar. Then he disappeared into the recesses

of the Twentieth Century Motor Factory, invented some things of the world-saving variety, and then burst back up at a company meeting with his melodramatic declaration about stopping the world's motor - literally. And then he was gone again.

For a book that makes such a big deal about childhood and other formative past experiences, it's kind of odd that the book's supposed hero gets practically no backstory at all. We do get a very small tidbit from Hugh Akston, Galt's professor/father-figure, however:

"John, the self-made man, self-made in every sense, out of nowhere, penniless, parentless, tie-less. Actually, he was the son of a gas-station mechanic at some forsaken crossroads in Ohio, and he had left home at the age of twelve to make his own way - but I've always thought of him as if he had come into the world like Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who sprang forth from Jupiter's head, fully grown and fully armed." (3.2.4.26)

That might not seem like a lot of information, but it raises some interesting points about Galt. First off, his childhood in a "forsaken crossroads" is linked to the running theme of "Starnesville," or dead-end, declining communities. Having escaped one of those, it's not surprising that Galt wanted to fight against ending up in another.

Secondly, Akston links Galt to the "Minerva myth." Minerva is the Roman name for the Greek goddess Athena, and Jupiter is the Roman name for Zeus. In mythology, Minerva sprang out of her dad's (Jupiter's) head as an adult. This isn't the first time that Galt has been tied to mythology. Two strangers tell Dagny that he discovered the lost city of Atlantis and the fountain of youth. And Francisco ties Galt to the Prometheus myth:

John Galt is Prometheus who changed his mind. After centuries of being torn by vultures in payment for having brought to men the fire of the gods, he broke his chains - and withdrew his fire - until the day when men withdrew their vultures. (2.5.1.266)

What's really interesting about this is that Francisco gets the Prometheus myth wrong. Prometheus stole fire and knowledge from the gods and gave it to people on earth. Zeus, the head-honcho god, punished Prometheus for his theft by chaining him to a rock and letting vultures come and pick out his liver every day. Yuck. Francisco makes it sound like "men" sent the vultures, though. So what gives? Well, over time the Prometheus myth had come to represent rebellious, anti-establishment ideas, with Zeus standing in for things like government, organized religion, parents, etc. So Francisco seems to be substituting powerful, oppressive humans for "Zeus" here.

So what's the deal with Galt's mythological connections? Well, this could be a way to emphasize his status as a living legend. In fact, for over half the book, characters like Dagny don't even think Galt is a real person. He's a totally mysterious figure, possibly a legend, possibly an actual person with legendary abilities.

The Inventor of the Motor

The heroic John Galt is linked with the theme of motors and the power of motion throughout the book. He invents fancy motors and he stops both metaphorical and literal ones with his strike, which effectively causes the whole country to fall apart - or at least helps the process along.

Yet we don't get tons of information about Galt's actions; we tend to get more about his ideas and views. This is a crucial point, and it's linked to Galt's lack of childhood backstory and his legendary status. See, Galt is all about the mind - people in this novel are defined by their views and their values. More than anyone else in the novel, Galt is defined by a philosophy, his own philosophy. So it seems that the narrative is reinforcing Galt's status as a heroic philosopher by characterizing him mainly by his philosophical ideas. It's no coincidence that Galt's major chapter is a super-long radio address where he outlines all his ideas about society. Galt basically *is* his philosophy.

This isn't to say that he just sits around writing long speeches and being philosophical, though. Galt's philosophy is about

working hard and making decisions, so he behaves accordingly, practicing what he preaches. Galt is also largely defined by his strike and his motor, which are epic quests that are bigger than one person. His actions seem to transcend his own person at times.

In that radio address, Galt defines himself by referring to themes of motors, minds, and strikes:

"I have stopped your motor. I have deprived your world of man's mind. Men do not live by the mind, you say? I have withdrawn those who do....While you were dragging to your sacrificial altars the men of justice, of independence, of reason, of wealth, of self-esteem - I beat you to it. I reached them first....I showed them the way to live by another morality - mine. It is mine that they chose to follow." (3.7.1.113-114)

Since thought without action is useless in Galt's mind, he created Atlantis, powered by his miracle motor, as a way to express his social vision and values. The denizens of Atlantis, Galt's fellow strikers, seem to have a massive case of hero-worship and some serious man-crushes on Galt. Dagny also sees Galt in very heroic, legendary terms. He was her ideal before she even had a name and a face to put with him:

She thought: to find a feeling that would hold, as their sum, as their final expression, the purpose of all the things she loved on earth....To find a consciousness like her own, who would be the meaning of her world, as she would be of his....A man who existed only in her knowledge of her capacity for an emotion she had never felt, but would have given her life to experience. (1.8.2.14)

But, as with most things in this book, terms don't always mean what we think they do. Throughout the book, people like Galt, Hank, and Dagny insist that what seems heroic, joyful, and seemingly rare should be normal. The heroic should be commonplace, because everyone should be heroic. So in that sense, Dagny sees Galt as a normal (in her sense) dude. Which brings us to John Galt the everyday person.

The Second Assistant Bookkeeper
This is a reference to Dr. Stadler's low assessment of his former student's achievements. Galt worked a dead-end job at Taggart Transcontinental for years as a way to express his beliefs and "strike" against society. (The man never does anything without some sort of philosophy to back it up. He probably has a philosophy of how to make an omelet.)

It would seem that there is very little about Galt that is not heroic or legendary. Even the discovery that he's the Mystery Worker to whom Eddie dished in the cafeteria does little to humanize or normalize him. We never get any of Galt's side of the conversation with Eddie. We have no idea what exactly he says to Eddie or how he speaks to him. Practically all the dialogue we get from Galt involves him speechifying about his values or professing his epic love for Dagny. The man just doesn't do small talk.

But all those ellipses (gaps) reveal something to us, though: Galt has a crush on Dagny. What could be more "normal" than that? Eddie is forever answering questions that Galt (his mystery friend) poses about Dagny. Galt basically spends ten years nursing a seriously bad case of lovesickness for her, bordering on creepy stalker behavior. Of course, he casts his love for Dagny in epic terms. But when you peel all the philosophy away, you're left with a guy with a really intense crush. It's almost pathetic, really. Galt spends years watching Dagny and waiting for her to notice he exists:

"Ten years of nights spent waiting to catch a glimpse of you, here, on the platforms, when you boarded a train....Whenever the order came down to couple your car, I'd know of it and wait, and see you come down the ramp, and wish you didn't walk so fast." (3.5.3.103)

He's like Ducky in *Pretty in Pink* here. Pathetic as this may be, Galt is still heroic, even with his super-bad crush. But he isn't perfect, and there's one last role he plays that is crucial to the narrative.

The Destroyer

Before meeting Galt, Dagny swears to kill him. She calls him the destroyer and says he's ruining the whole world, taking all the brains (including her friends) away from her. It takes a crash course in Galt's philosophy for her to understand that the destroyer and her ideal true love are the same person. But Galt is definitely a destructive force, and his strike has a lot of nasty consequences that can't be totally ignored. People die as a result of industrial accidents that might have been avoided if competent people were still on the job. People are also desperate, poor, driven to criminal activity, and starving. The terrible government obviously has a lot of do with it, but it's important to note that Galt holds some responsibility. Ultimately, you could argue that Galt is good, bad, or a combination of both.

Character Timeline

- Dagny meets John Galt in Atlantis
- Through flashbacks we learn the order of events leading up to this meeting:
- Galt invented the motor at the Twentieth Century Motor Factory.
- He quit the factory when the Starnes kids took over, vowing to stop the motors of the world.
- He began his strike with his friends Ragnar and Francisco.
- He slowly began recruiting more people to his cause.
- He started working a menial job at Taggart Transcontinental.
- He saw Dagny and fell in love with her.
- He watched her for a decade before meeting her.
- He often meets with Eddie Willers in the cafeteria and gets intel from him.
- He reluctantly lets Dagny go after she meets him in Atlantis.
- He follows her back to New York.
- The two have an encounter in one of the Taggart Terminal tunnels and start a romantic relationship.
- Galt gives a three-hour radio address on his values
- Dagny inadvertently leads the police to Galt and he is arrested.

- He refuses to cooperate with the government.
- He is forced onto TV for a sham banquet.
- He is tortured at the State Science Institute.
- His friends and Dagny rescue him.
- The group all escape back to Atlantis.
- Galt declares that their strike is over.

Character Analysis: Dagny Taggart

Aka (also known as):

Dagny, Miss Taggart, Dagny Taggart

Character Analysis

The novel may be obsessed with the question "Who is John Galt?" but first we need to ask, who is Dagny Taggart? At first glance, Dagny may seem like the easiest character to figure out. She's the star of the whole shebang, and we get almost an excess of information about her - compared to other characters at least. But she's really one of the most mystifying and complicated people in the book. Dagny makes a lot of polarizing choices that can be hard to understand. And things are further complicated by the fact that we often experience the book's roller-coaster ride of events and emotions through her eyes. So let's break Dagny down into her various component parts and see what we come up with.

"Gentleman - Taggart Transcontinental."
This is how Midas Mulligan introduces Dagny to the others when she arrives in Galt's "Atlantis" with a literal bang. Dagny certainly knows how to make a grand entrance, whether it's showing up at a party with a one-of-a-kind outfit or crashing her plane into the middle of someone's super secret town. Dagny seems to shock and surprise people without even trying.

Dagny is the Vice President of Operations of her family's railroad company, Taggart Transcontinental. What's so shocking about this? Well, in this novel, which often reflects the 1950s America in which it was written, women don't normally run railroads. Or even have jobs. Much less high-profile ones. And Dagny is definitely high-profile: she's brilliant, a powerhouse businesswoman, and is impressive enough to attract the attention of the "looters" and of Galt himself. But we often don't

get a sense of how high-profile Dagny actually is. So why is that?

Dagny herself dismisses gender prejudice against her, and the novel itself doesn't make a huge deal out it. This is perhaps because the novel is filtered through characters like Dagny, following her point of view. If Dagny doesn't make a big deal out of something, then the novel doesn't either. But we do get bits about the type of prejudice Dagny faces in her working life, including her relationship with Hank. Both Hank and Lillian acknowledge that Dagny will have a worse time of it if the affair becomes public knowledge, thanks to social double standards governing sex. Dagny also faces gossip from the general public about her career.

"So that is your famous sister?" said Balph Eubank to James Taggart, looking at Dagny across the room.

"I was not aware that my sister was famous," said Taggart, a faint bite in his voice.

"But, my good man, she's an unusual phenomenon in the field of economics, so you must expect people to talk of her. Your sister is a symptom of the illness of our century...a woman who runs a railroad, instead of practicing the beautiful craft of the handloom and bearing children." (1.6.1.148-150)

Balph Eubank is clearly unlikeable, but this conversation interesting points. It's easy to be caught off guard about Dagny's "fame," much as her resentful brother James is. The novel overall de-emphasizes Dagny's fame and notoriety. The bulk of the scenes we get with Dagny are private ones. She's having a conversation with a very small group of people or with one person. She also works by herself a lot. In scenes where Dagny is taking charge or interacting with a larger group of people, we still get a sense of her isolation.

She walked away from the table, to the window, to stand aside and let them continue without her.

. . . She did not listen to the voices of the men behind her. She did not know for how long the broken snatches of their struggle kept rolling past her. (2.5.1.138-139)

Dagny doesn't think of herself as a celebrity, and the novel itself doesn't treat her as one. She is instead depicted as a lonely, struggling figure. Why might this be? Well, Dagny isn't really part of the "real" world, even though she remains there for most of the novel (more on that later). Dagny lives by a different code of values and has ties to the underground world led by John Galt. But she refuses to join that underground for a very long time. As a result she has ties to both worlds, but she doesn't fully belong to either one. She's in a state of limbo much of the time.

Dagny stood on a street corner, where the airport bus had left her, looking at the city in passive astonishment. The buildings seemed worn.... She stood watching them, disarmed by an enormous sense of unreality. (3.3.2.1)

This was how they had gone - she thought - Atlantis, the city that sank into the ocean, and all the other kingdoms that vanished leaving the same legend in all the languages of men, and the same longing. She felt...the sense of vision of her own world, which she would never reach. (2.9.1.5)

Dagny feels that the real world is "unreal" and that she is barred from the world she wishes to join. She is paradoxically both tied to Atlantis and the real world and disconnected from them. Her unclear status serves a very important function in the novel, though. Dagny provides us with a link to each of these worlds, and we experience the full scope of the novel and its various worlds through her isolation. So Dagny serves a crucial function in the narrative and for readers. But how is Dagny important as a character in the novel? Not surprisingly, Dagny plays a lot of different roles to a lot of different people, and she connects to many of the novel's major themes.

The Mistress with Morals

Dagny is definitely a fan of keeping her romances on the down-

low. In fact, she has three clandestine love affairs over the course of the novel. Society disapproves of Dagny, condemning her for being an unfeeling workaholic, practically not even a woman at all, or a dirty mistress. She actually seems to take pride in both accusations, though. Since most people aren't thrilled to be classed as either a robot or a whore, this takes some explaining.

Dagny's character plays into one of the book's major themes: the values of Galt and his fellow strikers. These values are all totally opposed to the conventional values of real-world society. If society condemns Dagny for being a workaholic, unfeeling mistress, Galt and his pals praise her for it. In the value system that Dagny and Galt share, both hard work and sex are expressions of a person's joy for living, reflecting their morals and personal ideals. This entire novel seeks to challenge our conventional wisdom, forcing us to reconsider our values and ideas. Dagny herself plays an important role in that process, particularly in terms of commonly held views of sex. Her radio address, where she challenges her blackmailers head on by admitting openly to her affair with Hank, provides insight into her understanding of sex and love:

"I am proud that [Hank] has chosen me to give him pleasure and that it was he who had been my choice. It was not - as it is for most of you - an act of casual indulgence and mutual contempt. It was the ultimate form of our admiration for each other, with full knowledge of the values by which we made our choice. We are those who do not disconnect the values of their minds from the actions of their bodies." (3.3.3.18)

For Dagny, sex is a positive act connected with her value system. Interestingly, she points out here that she doesn't disconnect her mind from her body. Her physical actions reflect her values, and vice versa. Dagny links her love for three men (Francisco, Hank, and John) over the course of the novel with her passion for her work on the railroad. A passage set during the launch of the John Galt Line makes these connections apparent:

She heard the rising, accelerating sound of the wheels - and some theme of music, heard to the rhythm of the wheels, kept tugging at her mind, growing louder - it burst suddenly within the cab, but she knew that it was only in her mind: the Fifth Concerto *by Richard Halley....She saw Rearden's face above her, she held his eyes and her head leaned back, so that her face lay still on the air under his face.* (1.8.7.50)

At one point Eddie tells his mystery friend that Dagny loves two things in life: her railroad and Richard Halley's music (1.3.3.7). It's no mistake that the passage above unites the railroad, Richard Halley's music, and Henry Rearden's face in Dagny's thoughts. All three serve as expressions of her values and her love of life. And it is this optimism that leads us to two other key aspects of Dagny's character. First up: her connection to the theme of childhood.

Childhood and Choices

Throughout the novel Dagny is repeatedly described as somewhat childlike in appearance, particularly when she's sleeping. We also get a lot of her childhood flashbacks, and she frequently wonders why the world isn't as she expected it to be as a child. So what's the big deal with childhood? Well, it turns out that Galt's values are closely tied to the experience of childhood. Children are optimistic, energetic, and confident, which are all traits central to the values of Galt and Dagny.

When she opened her eyes, she saw sunlight, green leaves and a man's face. She thought: I know what this is. This was the world as she had expected to see it at sixteen - and now she had reached it. (3.1.1.1)

Dagny often recalls the hopeful vision of the world she had as a teenager, symbolized by railroad tracks disappearing into the distance. She felt that she had to grow up into that world, and that she would find a world that reflected her hard work and values at the end of the line.

You - she thought - whoever you are, whom I have always loved and never found, you whom I expected to see at the end of the rails

beyond the horizon [. . .] it is my love for you that kept me moving, my love and my hope to reach you and my wish to be worthy of you on the day when I would stand before you face to face. (2.9.1.6)

Dagny's purpose for living hinges on being "worthy." She wants to live up to her own highest values and to both create and find a world where those values are reflected. For Dagny, the ultimate expression of those values will be in the form of the man she loves. And yet, when Dagny finds that man - John Galt - she leaves him. This is probably the most perplexing decision in the whole book, especially since that decision, as well as Dagny's love for John, are both tied to the theme of childhood. We'll let Dagny take a crack at explaining herself here:

"I cannot bring myself to abandon to destruction all the greatness of the world, all that which was mine and yours, which was made by us and is still ours by right - because I cannot believe that men can refuse to see....So long as men desire to live, I cannot lose my battle." (3.2.6.76)

Dagny is a hardcore optimist. She's either the most heroically moral person in the book or the most naively optimistic. Her childlike optimism leads her both love Galt and leave him. It's a bit of a conundrum, but it actually helps unify Dagny as a character, even if her actions seem counterintuitive at times.

The Masochist

But Dagny isn't all childhood joy and sunshine and daisies. We can't dismiss her masochistic streak: she often seems to willingly accept and even enjoy pain. Dagny likes it when Francisco slaps her. In her mind that shows her he cares. She often has rather passionately violent sex with Hank. And she willingly accepts the pain of being away from Galt. Galt preaches that pain shouldn't be a part of life, and that self-sacrifice is wrong, but Dagny often seems to revel in exactly those things. Perhaps this is a way of making her a more believable character, with flaws. She definitely isn't perfect, but a lot of people in the book think she comes pretty darn close. Which brings us to Dagny's last major role:

The Ideal
Dagny is an ideal for most of the major male characters in the novel, embodying the book's overall value system. For Francisco, she's the symbol of his quest to reshape the world. For Hank, she's the wife he always wanted, as well as an inspirational teacher. For Eddie, she's a heroic, larger-than-life figure. For John Galt, she's the symbol of his ideals and his soulmate. Most of these characters at some point speak of how Dagny is their ideal and describe her as some sort of symbol. The tricky things with symbols, though - and especially with turning people into symbols - is that the reality doesn't always match up with the ideal.

Dagny's status as a symbolic ideal actually reveals more about the men in the novel than Dagny herself. What it does tell us is that Dagny lives by and embodies a certain code of values that others find inspirational. Complex as she is, Dagny is a still a heroic protagonist.

Character Timeline

- Dagny hears Richard Halley's mysterious *Fifth Concerto* on a train.
- She struggles to get Taggart Transcontinental's Rio Norte Line running.
- She goes on a quest to save the state of Colorado after their main railroad is shut down.
- She confronts her ex-lover Francisco d'Anconia over his recent bad behavior.
- She attends Hank Rearden's anniversary party. It's very awkward.
- She causes a minor scene when she demands that Hank's wife trade bracelets with her. (Hank's wife has a bracelet made from Rearden Metal.)
- Hank Rearden helps Dagny with the Rio Norte Line.
- She asks Francisco for a loan and he refuses. They have a painful confrontation.
- She forms the John Galt Line in order to make the work go faster. She takes a temporary leave of absence from Taggart Transcontinental.

- The John Galt Line opens and it's a huge success.
- She begins an affair with Hank Rearden.
- On vacation with Hank, she discovers a mysterious motor in an abandoned factory.
- She and Hank team up to search for the motor's inventor.
- She is horrified when laws pass that doom Colorado's industries.
- Her friend Ellis Wyatt disappears, and others soon follow.
- Dagny is convinced that a "destroyer" is causing these disappearances.
- After the restrictive Directive 10-289 passes, she quits her job.
- She goes to a cabin to think.
- Francisco comes to see her and reveals he's somehow involved with the "destroyer."
- She learns of a huge disaster at the railroad and returns to work.
- She has a confrontation with Hank and Francisco over her past relationship with Francisco.
- She goes after Quentin Daniels to prevent him from disappearing.
- After her train is delayed, she takes a plane to find Quentin.
- She chases after the destroyer and Quentin in her plane.
- She crashes in "Atlantis" and learns the truth about John Galt and the strike.
- She falls in love with Galt.
- She decides to return to the real world to keep fighting.
- After her return, she's blackmailed into giving a radio speech and admits her affair with Hank on the air.
- She and Hank break up but remain friends.
- She finds John Galt in New York and the two begin a romantic relationship.
- Dagny goes to see John after his radio address, worried for his safety
- When John is arrested, she goes undercover with the looters.
- She teams up with Hank, Francisco, and Ragnar to rescue John from torture.
- She escapes with all of them back to Atlantis.

Character Analysis: Hank Rearden

Aka (also known as):

Henry Rearden, Hank, Mr. Rearden

Character Analysis

Han is our co-protagonist, along with the savvy Dagny Taggart, and our main romantic male lead for much of the novel. (At least until he gets upstaged in Volume 3. Which is a serious bummer for poor Hank.)

Hank might just have the worst life of any character in the novel. His family is awful, his wife is evil, his true love disappears then dumps him for another man, and in the end he has to go live in the same town with said true love and her new boyfriend.

Somehow, though, Hank manages to not come off as a sad-sack Charlie Brown. In fact, the worse he is treated, the more likable he becomes. Perhaps it's because, in a novel filled with a lot of larger-than-life, heroic figures, Hank is someone we can relate to pretty well. We follow his struggles and his personal development from the very beginning of the novel.

Mr. Henry Rearden
Let's start off by assessing Hank's other persona: Henry. Henry Rearden is what people who don't know Hank very well call him, and this group includes businesspeople (not the cool ones) like James Taggart as well as members of Hank's own family. Henry Rearden is blasted in the media for being a greedy industrialist, and he's blasted in his own house for being a workaholic. (And also an evil industrialist.)

His mother, brother, and wife seem to think it's their mission in life to torment Hank. They constantly mock him, scold him, and

demand he do things for them. Hank gradually begins to realize that his family is walking all over him and, over the course of the novel, he begins to sever ties with them. This process mirrors the one he goes through in his professional life. His acceptance of "bad" values and his highly misplaced sense of guilt and self-loathing is what keeps him out of Galt's Atlantis for so long. Professionally, he was probably ready to head off to Atlantis long before he actually did it. And that frightens Hank:

Because he felt an exultant desire to laugh - as he had laughed at the news of Wyatt's fire, as he had laughed at the crash of d'Anconia Copper - and knew that if he did, the thing he feared would hold him, would not release him this time, and he would never see his mills again. (2.7.2.142)

The prospect of losing control, and of totally realigning his views and his value system, is frightening. But what exactly is Hank's value system, and why does it cause him so many problems for so long?

Rearden Life
This is of course a reference to the bold sign that Hank wanted to hang up when he was riding a wave of euphoria after pouring his first batch of Rearden Metal. Hank's values seem pretty easy to nail down: they are the same as Dagny's, Francisco's, John's, etc. The internal monologues and occasional speeches we get from Hank are evidence:

This is the world and the core of it, this is what made the city - they go together, the angular shapes of the buildings, and the angular lines of a face stripped of everything but purpose - the rising steps of steel and the steps of being intent upon his goal. (2.1.4.89)

Hank believes in hard work, achievement, pride, and honor. But for too long he doesn't realize that his values don't mesh with those of the "looters." For instance, he tries to treat his wife respectfully, when her only goal is to torture him.

Hank's main hang-ups have do with his personal relationships. His resentment of his awful family, his relationship with Dagny,

and sex in general cause him a lot of guilt. Francisco confronts Hank about these issues and tries to get him to stop having a massive guilt-complex:

You keep pushing out of your mind the thoughts which you believe to be evil.... You sacrifice your emotions as the first cost of any problem....You are willing to bear anything. (2.2.4.300)

What if you're placing your virtue in the service of evil and letting it become a tool for the destruction of everything you love, respect, and admire? Why don't you uphold your own code of values among men as you do among iron smelters? (2.2.6.97)

Hank's devotion to his work and his sense of morality and guilt keep him apart from Galt and his strikers for almost the entire book. Interestingly, we barely see Hank in Atlantis. We only get a very brief mention of him at Francisco's house at the very end of the novel. It's almost hard to picture him there, which Dagny comments on during her stay there:

She felt, simultaneously, that Hank Rearden's presence in this valley was impossible - and that this was his place, peculiarly his. (3.1.1.394)

This is significant: Hank's story is very much one of the outside world. He gradually learns to shed his guilt and finally joins the strike, but the moment he does, his narrative arc effectively ends. This puts Hank in a unique position in the novel: he's nearly the only character whose journey towards the strike we get to follow in full. Hank serves as something of a spotlight on the real world; it's through his personal journey that we learn about the "looters" and their views.

How does he make this journey? Francisco is definitely Hank's major teacher, but he has another source of inspiration as well: Dagny Taggart.

"The girl on the flatcar"
In a climactic scene at the end of Volume 3, Chapter 6, Hank simultaneously realizes that he is in love with Dagny and that

he has been serving a corrupt system. In keeping with the novel's themes, Hank's love for Dagny is an expression of his value system, which is also connected to his love of work and life.

Hank is blackmailed by the government into signing over the rights to Rearden Metal, the invention that inspired his proud and joyful "Rearden Life" fantasy. Hank not only realizes how much he loves Dagny here, but also how culpable he is in his own blackmail. If he hadn't been ashamed of his relationship with Dagny, and sought to hide it, the blackmailers would have no leverage:

Now, looking from the memory of the girl on the flatcar [Dagny] to the Gift Certificate lying on his desk, he felt as if the two met in a single shock, fusing all the days and doubts he had lived between them, and, by the glare of the explosion, in a moment's vision of a final sum, he saw the answer to all his questions. His thought: Guilty? - guiltier than I had known, far guiltier than I had thought, that day - guilty of the evil of damning as guilt that which was my best. (2.6.3.96)

But just when Hank comes to this epic realization, he loses Dagny to John Galt. What gives here? Hank is all lined up and ready to go as the book's major romantic hero, then some mystery dude swoops in and steals his thunder in Volume 3. For much of the book, Hank and Dagny are running on parallel tracks, so to speak. Their stories mirror one another, as both struggle to reconcile their personal values to the reality of the world, and to understand the nature of the strike and of John Galt. Their stories overlap for a long time as well. They even team up on the same quests together (building the John Galt Line, hunting for the inventor of the motor).

But just as Hank comes to his major realization, so does Dagny. She understands that she is still hunting for Atlantis and the man who embodies all her values: the as-yet-unnamed John Galt. Dagny's narrative path takes her in a different direction from Hank, which brings their romance to an end. We'll let Hank explain it, since we're actually still kind of miffed on his

behalf:

No, you did not make it worse for me, you set me free, you saved us both, you redeemed our past. ... I am happy that I have seen the truth - even if my power of sight is all that's left to me now. (3.3.3.71)

Hank's story really does all boil down to sight. Over the course of his journey, he sees what the looters really are, sees his guilt for what it is, sees his relationship with Dagny in a truer light, and sees, sadly, that his narrative path will have to diverge from Dagny's.

Character Timeline

- Hank pours the first batch of his great invention, Rearden Metal.
- That same evening, he must put up with his horrible family, which ruins the occasion.
- He agrees to help Dagny fix the Rio Norte Line and she becomes his first customer.
- He endures an awful anniversary party at his house.
- He meets Francisco d'Anconia at the party.
- He meets up with Dagny in Colorado and shows her plans for a Rearden Metal bridge.
- The Equalization of Opportunity Bill passes, which harms Hank's business.
- He is forced to sell some of his businesses to other people.
- He rides with Dagny on the first John Galt Line train.
- With some hesitancy, he begins a romantic relationship with Dagny.
- The two go on vacation, and Hank joins Dagny in her hunt for the inventor of the motor.
- He attends James Taggart's wedding with his wife and has another conversation with Francisco.
- Lillian confronts him about his adultery.
- Dr. Ferris invites him to join the looters, and Hank refuses.
- During a crisis at the mills, he ends up saving Francisco's life.

- His friend Ken Danagger goes on strike.
- He ditches his family at Thanksgiving to be with Dagny.
- He goes on trial for illegal business activity and makes a big speech. The phony charges against him are mostly dropped.
- Despite Francisco's warnings, he deals with d'Anconia Copper and loses out on a huge shipment. He is furious with Francisco.
- He is blackmailed into signing over the rights to his Rearden Metal because of his affair with Dagny.
- He realizes that he loves Dagny.
- He has an angry and jealous confrontation with Francisco and hits him.
- He desperately searches for Dagny when her plane crashes and she disappears.
- When Dagny returns from Atlantis, the two end their relationship but remain friends. Hank confesses his love for Dagny.
- He gets divorced from Lillian.
- After a riot at his mills, he finally goes on strike.
- He reconciles with Francisco.
- He returns to help Dagny free John Galt from capture.
- At the end, he returns safely to Atlantis.

Character Analysis: Francisco d'Anconia

Aka (also known as):

Francisco, Frisco, Francisco d'Anconia

Character Analysis

If John Galt is the shadowy, mysterious figure in the book, Francisco is the mystery man hiding in plain sight. We see a lot of Francisco in the first two volumes of the book, and each time he pops us he just seems to confuse us (and the other characters) more. Francisco is like a puzzle, really: we get a lot of separate pieces about him, but we can't assemble the whole thing until Volume 3, which should be called the volume where we finally get some freaking answers. Like most of the major characters in the book, Francisco is closely tied to some of the book's major themes and trends. So we'll break his character down accordingly.

International Playboy
Let's just get this out of the way: Francisco is hot. He's witty, he's charming, and he's described as ridiculously good-looking. You can't help but love the guy, as both Hank and Dagny discover, even when we think he's a sleaze. See, Francisco cultivates a public image as a spoiled playboy who completely mismanages his business. Aside from philandering and wasting money, his favorite pastimes seem to be mocking and manipulating people:

Then, raising his voice, Francisco said suddenly, in the gay, loose, piercing tone of a man of complete irresponsibility, "You won't grant me that loan, Mr. Rearden? It puts me on a terrible spot. I must get the money - I must raise it tonight - I must raise it before the Stock Exchange opens in the morning, because, otherwise -." He did not have to continue because the little man with the mustache was clutching at his arm...."Is [..] there something wrong, Senor

d'Anconia? I mean, on...on the Stock Exchange?" Francisco jerked his finger to his lips, with a frightened glance....The man was running across the room, pushing people out of his way, like a torpedo shot into the crowd. "Watch," said Francisco austerely, turning to Rearden. (2.2.4.340-50)

This is one of the best examples of Francisco's roller-coaster nature. He's a stellar actor, able to change his tone at the drop of a hat, to assume and drop his "irresponsible" persona at will. And he seems to take pleasure in watching the ensuing panic over his Stock Exchange rumor, like he's a sort of vindictive puppetmaster. He repeatedly tells Hank and Dagny that "contradictions don't exist," but he seems like a giant and unsolvable one much of the time. The only thing that saves Francisco from coming off as a total jerk are the scenes where he drops his playboy persona to reveal his pain. He doesn't seem to take pleasure in his acting all the time.

"Don't you want to see me crawling before you? Tell me what form of it you'd like and I'll submit."

He moved so swiftly that she could not notice how he started; it only seemed to her that his first movement was a shudder. He came around the desk, he took her hand and raised it to his lips....

He dropped her hand...he smiled, not bothering to hide that his smile held suffering, anger, and tenderness. (1891.7.7.30-32)

Francisco's relationship with the two people featured in the above scenes, Hank and Dagny, are central to understanding his character and his role in the novel. We'll start off with his relationship with Hank Rearden.

"My Greatest Conquest"

As far as nicknames go, this one kind of stinks. But Francisco does refer to Hank as his greatest conquest, and it is an apt description. See, Francisco is basically like a double-agent. He's sort of the public face of Galt's strike, hiding in plain sight and acting as a strike recruiter. It would seem that Francisco has called dibs on both Hank and Dagny in terms of recruitment.

Francisco has a really unique role in the strike. Most of the strikers live in obscurity, toiling away at menial jobs or hiding in Atlantis, which they often call Galt's Gulch. Francisco is the only one who is super famous and living a big fat lie. And this role is very important for readers, since Francisco provides us with the most clues as to what is really going on in the first two volumes. Francisco is also our introduction to John Galt's values, and he paves the way for Galt's arrival in Volume 3.

So in targeting Hank for strike recruitment, Francisco gives us important insight into Galt's value system. Francisco gives us mini-speeches on various topics that Galt will later pull into a unified, if longwinded, whole in his radio address: hard work, business, money, America, sex and love, guilt and sacrifice. The novel needs Francisco in this role because otherwise the mystery would really be too mysterious. Confusing as Francisco is personally, we'd have no idea what was going on in the big picture (i.e., the strike) if Francisco weren't around.

In his chats with Hank, Francisco not only gives us insight into Galt's philosophy, he also plays a major role in developing and evolving Hank's character. The two form a meaningful friendship that reflects their shared values, much as the book's various romantic relationships also demonstrate this theme. Every action and every relationship has some sort of philosophical meaning.

Francisco smiled, a smile of greeting to a childhood friend on a summer morning, as if nothing else had ever been possible between them - and Rearden found himself smiling in answer, some part of him feeling an incredulous wonder, yet knowing that it was irresistibly right. (3.6.1.459)

In his interactions with Hank, Francisco is linked to the strike, the book's overall philosophy, and important themes of sex, America, money, etc. But the above passage references the childhood theme, and it is this one that is really central to Francisco's character.

"By the woman I love"
Francisco is repeatedly tied into the theme of the importance of the past. His shared history with Dagny is one of the book's central plots.

Francisco and Dagny mirror one another in some very interesting ways. Both are frequently described in terms of youthfulness. Both grew up together and subsequently developed and shared the same values. Both have ancestors who inspire them. (Francisco's ancestor Sebastián d'Anconia provides an important counterpoint to Dagny's Nat Taggart.) And both come from wealth, which contrasts to characters like Hank and John, who started out poor. Francisco and Dagny are heirs who will inherit family businesses rather than build their own from scratch.

It's clear that Francisco has a hugely formative impact on Dagny's character. He is the part of her past most highly emphasized. Their love affair, with its disastrous end, greatly shapes Dagny as an adult and paves the way for her eventual romances with Hank and John. That's ironic, or funny in a dark sort of way, because poor Francisco has been doing the entire strike thing for the sake of his true love, Dagny. Through Francisco and Dagny we learn that while the past is an influential and a driving force in people's lives, it can't ever be repeated or recaptured.

Francisco ties his childhood to history by using the legend of Sebastián d'Anconia as a guiding principle. Again, Francisco shows us connections between personal values, childhood, and romantic love here:

"I am thinking of the fifteen years that Sebastián d'Anconia had to wait for the woman he loved: He did not know whether he would ever find her again, whether she would survive...whether she would wait for him. But he knew that she could not live through his battle and that he could not call her to him until it was won....But when he carried her across the threshold of his house, as the first Señora d'Anconia of a new world, he knew that the battle was won." (2.5.1.240)

Just rip our hearts out and stomp on them, Francisco. Unlike his triumphant ancestor, Francisco loses his true love to another man. Dagny and Francisco will always share a past, but they can't ever fully return to it:

It was a moment's view of a morning they would have reached, if her vision of life had been fulfilled, if they had both gone the way she had then been so certain of going....She stood looking at him, not in the name of the present, but as a salute to their past. (2.8.1.30)

"That *was my love, that state of the human spirit, and I left you to fight for it, and I knew that if I were to lose you, it was still* you *that I would be winning with every year of the battle. But you see it now, don't you? You've seen this valley. It's the place we set out to reach as children, you and I. We've reached it."* (3.2.2.62)

More than anyone else in the book, Francisco illustrates the idea of maintaining the values of childhood. The past isn't pain, but a cause for celebration for Francisco. Just as his love for Dagny isn't really lost, since she serves as an ideal for him, which he has won even if he doesn't physically have her anymore.

Character Timeline

- Through a flashback, we learn that Francisco and Dagny were childhood friends and later lovers. Francisco mysteriously broke up with Dagny and became an irresponsible playboy. Dagny confronted him about his behavior.
- Francisco meets Hank at Hank's anniversary party.
- Later Dagny asks him for a loan and he refuses, but is upset about having to refuse.
- Francisco crashes James's wedding reception and makes a speech about money.
- He talks with Hank again.
- The d'Anconia stock crashes.
- Francisco visits Hank at the mills and helps out during a crisis.
- Hank loses a lot of money after dealing with Francisco's

business. He is furious with Francisco.
- Francisco visits Dagny at her cabin after she quits her job. He is horrified when she goes back to work again.
- He has an angry confrontation with Hank over his past relationship with Dagny.
- A distraught Francisco searches for Dagny, thinking she's dead.
- He meets her in Atlantis and confesses his role in the strike and his love for her.
- The two rekindle their friendship
- Francisco gives Dagny his blessing for her relationship with John.
- He saves Hank's life during the riot at the mills and takes Hank to Atlantis.
- He sends Dagny a message after John is arrested.
- He comes to get Dagny when she quits and joins the strike.
- They join up with Hank and Ragnar to rescue John from capture.
- He returns to Atlantis.

Character Analysis: James Taggart

Aka (also known as):

James, Mr. Taggart, Jim, James Taggart

Character Analysis

We agree with Betty Pope's assessment of James Taggart: she calls him a snail (1.4.2.10). It's quite fitting really. James is slimy, often slow, and seems to enjoy mucking around in the dirt. Snails may not seem threatening, but out of everyone in the book, James is one of the most obvious villains. He's definitely the villain with whom we spend the most time.

But James isn't your typical villain. He doesn't twirl his mustache and plot evil schemes. He doesn't run around actively causing destruction and mayhem. He doesn't have an epic showdown with the book's hero(es). Instead, he often appears to be out of control and unaware, or at least in denial, about what it is he's doing. He's a villain, but he's also a victim of his own wacky ideology. James gives us a picture of something that's truly sinister and frightening: the power that weak and cowardly people can wield with destructive ideas. James the snail is definitely one of the Captains of Team Looter, and he occupies the curious position of being simultaneously both very powerful and very weak. He is also both frightening and pathetic.

In order to get a handle on James's destructive ideology, it helps to understand his most important relationships. We'll start off with the one he shares (and lacks) with his younger sister Dagny.

The Taggart Siblings
OK, so we said before that James doesn't have an epic showdown with the book's heroes. His "showdown" with Galt

consists of him freaking out in a corner, so that doesn't quite count. James does have some fights with Dagny, but they aren't really showdowns in the traditional hero versus villain sense. Neither James nor Dagny seem to win in these encounters. We learn right from the start that the Taggart siblings don't understand each other:

[James] liked to observe emotions; they were like red lanterns strung along the dark unknown of another's personality, marking vulnerable points. But how [Dagny] could feel a personal emotion about a metal alloy...was incomprehensible to him, so he could make no use of his discovery. (1.1.4.50)

They stood facing each other. He looked as if, for the first time, he was not afraid of her. He was gloating....For the flash of one instant, she thought that here, before her, in James Taggart and in that which made him smile, was a secret she had never suspected [...] But the thought flashed and vanished. (1.4.5.27-28)

This lack of understanding between James and Dagny symbolizes the lack of understanding the looters of the world have for Galt and his strikers, and vice versa.

We learn that James is a manipulator. He uses people's emotions against them and seems to enjoy causing other people hurt, embarrassment, and anger. This is another crucial difference between James and his sister: while James uses and relies upon emotions, Dagny uses logic and reason. James's career began in public relations, and he is a political mover and shaker in Washington. Dagny began as an engineer and relies upon facts and data in her work.

In fact, the Taggart siblings are polar opposites, each representing different sides of the major thematic debates in the novel. Which raises the question: how did two siblings end up so radically different from each other?

If you are looking for some sort of childhood flashback that might give insight into this, you're pretty much out of luck. We get very limited back story on James, and though we learn that

his fear and resentment of his talented sister is longstanding, we don't learn exactly how and why that resentment festered as badly as it did. James is obviously jealous of Dagny, and he betrays that emotion rather spectacularly at times. Here's one example:

"My sister. My dear sister. Oh, she'll think she's so great, won't she?"

"You dislike your sister, Mr. Taggart?" He made the same sound; its meaning was so eloquent that she needed no answer. "Why?" she asked.

"Because she thinks she's so good. What right has she to think it? What right has anybody to think he's good? Nobody's any good. [...] I mean, we're only human beings - and what's a human being? A weak, ugly, sinful creature, born that way, rotten to the bones." (1.9.2.120-125)

Dagny stands for everything James hates and fears (fears because he hates it and hates because he fears it). James resents the fact that Dagny is so obviously better than him at everything, that her worldview is totally opposed to his, and that he can't ever seem to fully beat her. James is basically a bully, and he's mad that he can't get a victory over his sister; he can't cause her emotional damage.

This book puts very little stock in family connections. People here are individuals with free will, and their families (or lack thereof) have very little to do with who they are. Both Dagny and Hank are totally different from their families. We do learn that James had potential, though, during his character introduction:

His posture had a limp, decentralized sloppiness, as if in defiance of his tall, slender body, a body with an elegance of line intended for the confident poise of an aristocrat, but transformed into the gawkiness of a lout. (1.1.1.31)

James could have been a confident Taggart in the same way his sister is. But he found the world of the looters hard to resist. It's

no mistake that while James is compared derisively to a snail, Dagny's childhood nickname (courtesy of Francisco) was "slug." James and Dagny both started out the same in terms of their Taggart heritage, but they quickly embarked on separate paths, even as they remained connected through their railway.

James is not only a character with free will, who effectively made himself as bad as he is, but he is also the symbolic representative of the entire world of looters. Through James we see the ease with which people fall sway to bad doctrines and turn into bad people. Through James we also see the sneaky way in which the looters operate: James may not have realized what he was becoming, and Dagny doesn't realize James's true threat until very late in the game. She mistakenly dismisses him as weak, when his moral, mental, and emotional weakness is actually a powerful destructive force. How is James a destructive force worthy of his villain status? To answer that, we'll need to look at his other major relationship: that with Cherryl Brooks.

Marital Relations

There are a lot of workplace scenes that give us insight into James's character and ideology. He's manipulative, vindictive, prone to hysterics and meltdowns, whiny, shrill, accusatory, overly defensive, and a proud spouter of "looter" ideology. James thinks that people are awful, that spiritual concerns should triumph over material ones. He believes in the superiority of a communist-type system of government over a capitalist one.

But we get the fullest view of James as a person and a representative looter through his relationship with his young wife Cherryl. Perhaps this is because he tries to "educate" her to his way of thinking. Perhaps the book is drawing a distinction between the type of shady and personalized business dealings the looters do, as opposed to the rational, fair, and honest dealings of the strikers.

At any rate, James's rants to his wife are revealing, as is the fact that he married her in the first place. His relationship with the

naive young Cherryl helps demonstrate the full extent of his manipulative and often cruel personality. He thought she would worship him unquestioningly; when she didn't, he lashed out at her in hatred.

"You should have heard Bertram howl! He was a dead duck and he knew it."

He started on a rolling chuckle, but choked it off, as the haze cleared and he saw his wife's face. "Jim," she whispered, "is that the sort of...victories you've been winning?"

"Oh, for Christ's sake!" he screamed, smashing his fist down on the table. "Where have you been all these years? What sort of world do you think we're living in?"..."I couldn't help it!...I'm not to blame! I have to take things as I find them! It's not I who've made this world!" (3.4.1.108-12)

James reveals a tendency toward both hysterics and violence here. We see more of these qualities in him as the novel draws to a close. He hits Cherryl and is vicious toward her on the night of her suicide. He is also a bystander to John Galt's torture, though this is when he seems to realize the scary truth about himself and suffers a total collapse.

The Looters

James's rants are born out of fear, but what exactly is he so afraid of and defensive about? In James's interactions with Dagny and with his politician and businessman cronies, we usually get more of his dialogue than his thoughts. But in his interactions with Cherryl, we get to see inside his head:

Why did it have to shrink? - he thought in panic. This was the way he had lived all his life - keeping his eyes stubbornly, safely on the immediate pavement before him, craftily avoiding the sight of his road, of corners, of distances, of pinnacles. He had never intended on going anywhere, he had wanted to be free of progression, free to the yoke of a straight line...why had he reached some unchosen destination where one could no longer stand still or retreat? (3.4.1.10)

James is terrified by the prospect of change and the necessity of making a choice. He reveals this countless times throughout the book, whether it's by forcing Dagny to make a decision for him at work, or passing directives in Washington to keep things safely standing still. The ultimate why, though - why he feels this particular way - remains a mystery. This is interesting in and of itself, though, since it highlights the irrationality of the looters' panic and fear.

The problem for James, and the looters in general, may boil down to need. As Galt tells us, looters worship need, charity, and self-sacrifice as virtues. Galt feels that these things are problematic and turn men against each other. We can see this happening in James's case:

"It's your sin if I suffer! It's your moral failure! I'm your brother, therefore I'm your responsibility, but you've failed to supply my wants, therefore you're guilty!" (3.5.1.84)

James needs Dagny, and he hates the fact that he needs her, but he is paralyzed by fear. Rather than stand on his own, James is filled with rage and longs to destroy "life" and "greatness" for the sake of destruction. Appropriately, at the end of the novel James totally collapses as an individual.

Character Timeline

- James has a series of confrontations with Dagny and Eddie.
- He has an affair with Betty Pope.
- He meets with Orren Boyle and Wesley Mouch.
- He freaks out over the San Sebastián Mine disaster.
- He tries to con Dagny into participating in a radio debate about Rearden Metal, but she refuses.
- He becomes upset with Dagny over the plan for the John Galt Line, but he takes credit for the plan when it succeeds.
- He meets Cherryl Brooks.
- He marries Cherryl.

- At the reception, he bonds with Lillian.
- He is present at the meeting where Directive 10-289 is discussed.
- He furiously confronts Dagny after the Taggart Tunnel disaster.
- He is less than thrilled to learn that his sister survived her plane crash.
- He has several violent arguments with Cherryl.
- He sleeps with Lillian Rearden.
- He hits Cherryl during a fight. Later that night, she commits suicide.
- He tries to grow closer to Dagny after Cherryl's suicide.
- He is present when John Galt is tortured, which results in his mental breakdown.

Character Analysis: Eddie Willers

Aka (also known as):

Eddie, Eddie Willers, Mr. Willers, Edwin Willers

Character Analysis

We *get* Eddie Willers. In a book filled with larger-than-life heroic figures, living legends, moral strikers, destructive "looters," and industrial giants, Eddie is just a normal guy. He works a decent job at the railroad, nursing a long-time crush on his best friend from childhood. All of which leads us to ask: what on earth Eddie is actually doing in this novel in the first place?

The answer is that Eddie is playing the role of the everyman here. He's the decent guy who hates the villains without himself being a hero. As the regular guy just trying to survive, Eddie also provides readers with a much needed "in" to the story. Eddie asks the sort of questions that people do when they're trying to figure out a mystery that seems light years beyond them - which is exactly the position the reader is in at the beginning of the novel. As an average Joe, Eddie represents a whole country of decent people who have the bad luck to be living during rotten times.

Aside from being exceptionally unexceptional, Eddie the everyman also provides us with some fresh perspective on the book's major themes and ideas.

Cafeteria Conversations
Functioning as our "in" to the story, Eddie often gets saddled with a lot of the book's exposition: the factual, introductory details that clue us in to what's going on. While everyone else is busy speechifying and thinking Deep Thoughts, Eddie gives us the facts.

Most of our scenes with Eddie involve him having curiously detailed one-sided conversations with a mystery railroad worker, whom we later find out is John Galt. These conversations not only provide us with facts and bring us up to speed when the narrative jumps ahead in time; they also give us a lot of insight into Eddie, Dagny, and Galt himself. Eddie confesses his fears, his feelings for Dagny, his love of the railroad, etc. in these conversations, which often take on the form of a confessional.

It's oddly fitting that Eddie is the person involved in these conversations, which help anchor jam-packed chapters. Eddie is often our only link to Taggart Transcontinental, since both James and Dagny are frequently depicted elsewhere. He's a valuable source of Intel on various characters and major events.

It's also worth noting that Eddie actually has a personal relationship with John Galt, even though Galt never really talks about Eddie. Aside from the Taggart siblings, the only other people we really see Eddie interact with in the novel are Francisco (via flashbacks), Hank, and John. This is notable, because it shows how much Eddie's character is filtered through Dagny's. All of the people he interacts with in the book are major figures in Dagny's life, and he's often talking to them about her. Eddie is a bit like Dagny's shadow, really. So let's look more closely at Eddie's relationship with the Taggarts.

The Feudal Serf

The Taggarts are central to understanding Eddie's identity. James Taggart, being a jerk as usual, calls Eddie the Taggarts' "feudal serf" in Chapter 1, and Eddie doesn't deny the characterization. Apparently the Willers family has always worked for the Taggarts. Eddie grew up playing with Dagny, who is two years his senior, and has clearly always worshiped her as a hero:

That day, in a clearing in the woods, the once precious companion of his childhood told him what they would do when they grew up. The words were harsh and glowing, like the sunlight. He listened in admiration and in wonder. When he was asked what he would want

to do, he answered at once, "Whatever is right," and added "You ought to do something great...I mean the two of us together." "What?" she asked. He said "I don't know. That's what we ought to find out. Not just business and earning a living."... What do you suppose is the best within us?" "I don't know." "We'll have to find out." She did not answer; she was looking away, up the railroad track. (1.1.1.27)

Eddie loves Dagny, and throughout the novel he clearly favors her values over those of people like James. James confuses and frightens him. In fact, Eddie frequently confides his distress about the state of the world to Dagny, wanting her to reassure him and explain it all to him. But Eddie doesn't just use Dagny as a shield; he's also fiercely protective of her, as he reveals in one of his conversations with Galt:

"It's not so bad for me in the daytime, because I can keep busy and not think, but it gets me at night. I can't sleep anymore. I lie awake for hours.... Yes! - if you want to know it - yes, it's because I'm worried about her! I'm scared to death for her!" (2.7.1.1)

So if Eddie shares Dagny's values, and is no friend of the looters, then why isn't he invited to participate in the strike? Did his invitation get lost in the mail? Galt spent all that time talking to him and still didn't offer to help Eddie out? What gives here?

To answer that, we need to look at Eddie's personal values and at his important role in bookending the book.

Beginnings and Endings

It is fitting that Eddie Willers begins and ends the book for us. He's the first person we meet, in a sequence that sets in motion the novel's ongoing mystery (what's happening to the world and who is John Galt?) and introduces a feeling of ominous doom that lingers throughout the novel. We experience dread most acutely through Eddie, the average guy who doesn't have the answers or the tools to change things.

Eddie Willers walked on, wondering why he always felt it at this time of day, this sense of dread without reason....It's the twilight, he

thought: I hate the twilight. (1.1.1.10-12)

Eddie introduces us to the theme of encroaching darkness here as well, both metaphorical and literal. Galt's strike is seeking to "extinguish all the lights" after all. To see why Eddie wasn't able to, and in terms of the narrative could not escape the darkness, we need to look at his unrequited love for Dagny and at his final scene.

When they were gone, he felt what one feels at the loss of a dream one had not known till after it was lost. (2.9.2.37)

Then suddenly he felt the blinding surge of a desperate, righteous anger. He leaped to his feet, seizing the throttle. He had to start this train; in the name of some victory that he could not name, he had to start the engine moving....Don't let it go! his mind was crying....He was pulling at coils of wire, he was linking them and tearing them apart....He heard himself crying soundlessly - Dagny, in the name of the best within us...I must now start this train! (3.10.2.79-82)

Poor Eddie always realizes things too late. He sees his "dream" for what it is only after it is gone. He's always been a few steps behind Dagny, and when the country collapses he is no longer able to follow her. It's tragic and cruel, but it also serves a larger purpose in the narrative: Eddie represents all the people who were left behind by Galt's strike and were royally screwed by the looters' regime. Eddie needs to be where he is at the beginning and the end of the novel, since it's through him that we experience the devastating effects of a country in collapse.

Character Timeline

- Eddie loyally helps Dagny in her quest to save Colorado and the Rio Norte Line.
- He has the first of many recurring scenes with a mysterious Taggart Transcontinental employee in the cafeteria, the Mystery Worker.
- He temporarily replaces Dagny as vice president of Taggart while she runs the John Galt Line.
- He meets with Hank Rearden at his hotel. Hank gives

Taggart an extension on their Rearden Metal payment.
- He keeps Dagny's whereabouts a secret after she quits her job.
- He is upset when she returns.
- He helps Dagny pack before she takes off in pursuit of Quentin Daniels.
- He discovers that Dagny is having an affair with Hank.
- He realizes he's in love with Dagny.
- He continues to help Dagny when she returns from Atlantis.
- He accompanies her to the radio station on the night of Galt's speech.
- He confesses that he's been meeting with Galt for years without knowing it was him.
- After hearing about a crisis in California, he volunteers to go handle it.
- He says an emotional goodbye to Dagny.
- He is stranded in the wilderness when his train breaks down in Arizona.

Character Analysis: Robert Stadler

Aka (also known as):

Robert Stadler, Stadler, Dr. Stadler

Character Analysis

At the beginning of the movie *Trainspotting*, the main character Renton goes on a rather famous rant, telling people to "Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family." And on and on, until finally wrapping up by asking why people bother choosing any of that stuff when there's heroin available. Galt may seem like the anti-Renton, since he tells everyone to choose "life" over "death" (or slow death via bad morals). But both Galt and the "looters" agree with Renton on a certain point: average, everyday life kind of stinks. And both groups offer up their own kind of "heroin" to make life better.

For Galt, life as most people live it is no better than death. "Life" for him refers to his philosophical and moral system. The looters take Renton's route more directly. They concede that life is indeed crap, but make it marginally more bearable by embracing their own system of morals (their version of heroin). Galt may love his either-or scenarios, opposing life and death dramatically, but like the looters he tries to give people an alternative to a life that currently stinks. The main difference between the two groups is that Galt wants to fix the world, while the looters want to maintain the status quo.

Why are we bringing all of this up under "Robert Stadler"? Well, Stadler poses an interesting problem: what happens when a character thinks he is choosing Galt's idea of a positive life but is actually choosing a more harmful form of "heroin"? Well, in this book he gets blown up in the most spectacular failure of a science project ever. Project X is definitely going to be disqualified from the science fair for that, not to mention its

unpardonable cruelty to goats.

Robert Stadler, genius physicist and sad old man, plays a hugely important role in the book. He demonstrates just how close Galt and the looters can be, and how frighteningly easy it is to slide into the looters' camp without even consciously realizing it. Rather than being an outright antagonist for Galt, he instead functions as a fascinating foil.

Head in the Sand
Robert Stadler starts out with good intentions. He even shares a lot of the values that Galt preaches. After all, Galt studied under him at Patrick Henry University and they got along very well. Stadler believes in the power of science and prizes smarts and ability. But these values lead him into two errors.

The first is that Stadler buries his head in the sand. He sees that the world has problems, but he can't think of a way to fix them. So, while he doesn't agree with the values of the looters, he ends up doing exactly what they preach: denying and ignoring problems. Here's an example of Captain Oblivious in action:

"Do you know the statement issued by this institute in regard to Rearden Metal?"

He frowned slightly, "Yes, I've heard about it."

"Have you read it?"

"No."

"It was intended to prevent the use of Rearden Metal."

"Yes, yes, I gathered that much.'

"Could you tell me why?"

He spread his hands...."I really wouldn't know." (1.7.5.12-19)

Stadler ignores basic things going on around him, often because

he thinks he's so much better than everyone else. He has to think big and important thoughts; current events are irrelevant to him, and best left to others. Stadler also using his amazing powers of obliviousness to ignore his own doubts and concerns.

He would not permit himself to know that what he felt was self-loathing; he identified the emotion but not its object; it was loathing for the men around him, he thought; it was they who were forcing him to go through this shameful performance. What can you do - he thought - when you have to deal with people? (3.3.1.31)

This passage also reveals Stadler's other major error: he often ignores things around him because of his contempt for other people. He hates society and other people at times, describing them as hopelessly stupid.

"Men are not open to truth or reason....Yet we have to deal with them. If we want to accomplish anything, we have to deceive them into letting us accomplish it. Or force them.... They are nothing but vicious animals." (1.7.5.97)

With all his brains and ability, Stadler grows to hate the "lesser" people around him and resorts to ignoring them as a way to surviving among them. So he is also pessimistic - people are "hopelessly" stupid in his opinion. Stadler has become increasingly disillusioned over the years, and by the time we meet him, his negative opinion of mere mortals seems firmly entrenched.

Foil Status

Galt states on more than one occasion that he has a lot of contempt for Stadler, since Stadler had the potential to do better. Such statements are revealing, since they show us that Galt also has some contempt for society at large, much like Stadler himself. After all, Galt wouldn't advocate his strike if he thought society and the looters could be reasoned with in any other way. It's Dagny who has enough faith in people to stay behind and fight in the real world. Arguably, Galt is using tough love in order to save people, but both he and Stadler both proceed from a similar assumption, that people kind of suck.

Stadler, then, acts as a really interesting foil to Galt. Though they seem like opposites, they are similar in a lot of ways, and their actions are not always easy to distinguish. Both ignore society in their own way: Galt through his strike and Stadler through his Captain Oblivious routine. Both can also be accused of being pretentious, full of themselves. But there is a crucial difference: Galt uses his views of life proactively to try to fix the world, while Stadler tries to get by in the world as it is.

Ultimately, Stadler's gruesome death is a symbolic statement of this difference. Stadler blows up in a science project gone awry, a project built by his own institute. Stadler digs his own grave in that sense; compromise didn't work. But Stadler also shows us how frighteningly easy it is to misinterpret value systems in this book. Stadler didn't set out to enable evil people or to make awful decisions. He went to his ultimate doom without fully realizing what was happening.

Character Timeline

- Stadler has a meeting with Dagny over the State Science Institute's statements regarding Rearden Metal. He is largely clueless.
- He tells Dagny about his three former students who turned out badly.
- He confronts Dr. Ferris about his book.
- He goes to New York to meet with Dagny and learns about the motor.
- He recommends Quentin Daniels to Dagny.
- We learn about Stadler's falling out with John.
- He is present at the first test of Project X.
- He gives a radio speech saying how great Project X is.
- He has another confrontation with Dr. Ferris.
- He is present at the station during John Galt's speech.
- Stadler meets with Galt after he is arrested. They have an angry confrontation.
- Stadler goes to take over Project X.
- He is killed when Project X explodes.

Character Analysis: Lillian Rearden

Aka (also known as):

Lillian, Lilian Rearden, Mrs. Rearden

Character Analysis

Lillian Rearden might be the most boring character in whole book. She really almost seems pointless. First off, she's a totally ineffectual villain - she's totally inept at getting Hank:

The punishment she had wanted to inflict on him was the torture of shame; what she had inflicted was the torture of boredom. (2.4.1.57)

Worst. Villain. Ever. So what on earth is Lillian's purpose here? Besides boring everyone to death that is. Well, she's mainly important in terms of Hank's characterization. She symbolizes his moral struggle, and she is also set up as a contrast to Dagny.

What's fascinating, though, is that Hank doesn't see the contrast at first. He mistakes Lillian for the type of person Dagny is. How does he make such an error? Let's check it out:

It was Lillian's austerity that attracted him - the conflict between her austerity and her behavior.... He found himself held by the spectacle of a woman who was obviously pursuing him but with obvious reluctance..... It was the difficulty of the conquest that made him want Lillian. (1.6.2.12-14)

Hank seems to associate austerity - a cool, emotionless attitude - with purity. And Hank, who loves a challenge, wants to "conquer" that purity. Intriguingly, Hank views Dagny in the same terms as he once did Lillian early in their acquaintance. He sees her as noble and "pure" and is ashamed of his sexual attraction to her. In the end, though, Hank learns that Lillian is

a cold and cruel person, while Dagny is noble. Hank also learns to view sex as something noble in his relationship with Dagny.

Overall, though, Lillian doesn't really qualify as a foil to Dagny. Instead, the two women are set up on totally opposite sides of the spectrum, showing the contrast between a woman firmly rooted in the looters' regime and one firmly committed to Galt's value system. Here's a scene where Lillian makes a failed attempt to humiliate Dagny.

"Miss Taggart," she said, "I am not your equal in philosophical altitude. I am only an average wife. Please give me that bracelet - if you do not wish me to think what I might think and what you wouldn't want me to name."

"Mrs. Rearden, is this the manner and place in which you choose to suggest that I am sleeping with your husband?"

"Certainly not!" The cry was immediate; it had a sound of panic and the quality of an automatic reflex, like the jerk of withdrawal of a pickpocket's hand caught in action. (2.2.4.124-6)

Aside from getting owned here, Lillian is also interestingly compared to a "pickpocket." She tries to act like a queen of manipulation, but she's really sort of a petty thief, a "looter of the spirit" who can never quite manage to one-up people with Galt's values. This scene also reveals Lillian's view of sex as something shameful and animalistic, which is an attitude that further contrasts her with Dagny, who unites rather than debases her mind and body.

Of course, Lillian did have a decent run with Hank over the years. She made him feel guilty and deny his own desires. But the instant Hank withdrew his "sanction," so to speak, Lillian crumbled like a house of cards. There's something very hollow about Lillian Rearden.

"I've been unfaithful to you! Don't you hear me, you stainless Puritan? I've slept with James Taggart, you incorruptible hero! Don't you hear me?...Don't you hear me?...Don't you . . .?"

He was looking at her as he would have looked if a strange woman had approached him on the street with a personal confession - a look like the equivalent of the words: Why tell it to me?

Her voice trailed off. He had not known what the destruction of a person would be like; but he knew that he was seeing the destruction of Lillian. He saw it in the collapse of her face. . . . (3.6.1.178-180)

This scene helps to reveal the hollow nature of the looters as a whole, and it also highlights Lillian's connection with James Taggart. Lillian is sort of the female version of James. Both thrive on manipulating others and on using their code of "morals" to cause others pain. Both share an understanding - they speak a similarly evasive language and seem to view each other as kindred spirits. Of course, being kindred spirits, they often display contempt for one another, as their awkward and mean-spirited sex scene reveals (3.4.3.110-17). In the end, James and Lillian suffer very similar fates, having failed to achieve the sort of victories they wanted.

Character Timeline

- Lillian mocks Hank when he gives her his Rearden Metal bracelet.
- She throws an anniversary party and invites people Hank dislikes.
- Dagny confronts Lillian over the bracelet and makes her trade it for a diamond one.
- Lillian learns that Hank is having an affair, but she doesn't know who with.
- She bonds with James at his wedding reception.
- She learns that Hank is having an affair with Dagny and they argue.
- She tells James about the affair, which leads to Hank being blackmailed.
- Hank files for divorce.
- Lillian asks James for help and they sleep together.
- Hank gets his divorce.
- A furious Lillian confronts Hank and is crushed when he is

indifferent towards her.

Character Analysis: Cherryl Brooks Taggart

Aka (also known as):

Cherryl, Cherryl Brooks, Miss Brooks, Mrs. Taggart

Character Analysis

Cherryl is probably the most major minor character in the novel. After all, an entire chapter is devoted to her, which is highly unusual (3.4 - Anti-Life). Though we get glimpses of her earlier, she's always overshadowed. She is even upstaged on her own wedding day (thanks a bunch, Francisco!). Cherryl's main chapter, set on the night of her death, is, in a nutshell, the life's journey of one of the victims of the looters and one of the consequences of Galt's strike. Cherryl is the doomed and misguided victim, the decent person who couldn't fight the looters or be saved by Galt's strike.

Miss Cherryl Brooks of Madison Square
Of all the characters in the book, Cherryl gives us one of the clearest glimpses of the effects of poverty. When we meet Cherryl she is slaving away in a dime store (think CVS, Rite-Aid, or Walgreen's), dreaming of making a better life for herself. She mirrors characters like John Galt and Hank Rearden in that she escaped the slums of her childhood and is setting out to improve her life.

"Mr. Taggart" - she jerked her head in a shudder and looked straight at him - "we were stinking poor and not giving a damn about it. That's what I couldn't take - that they really didn't give a damn." (1.9.2.88)

Cherryl makes a critical mistake here, though. She mistakes James for a figure of "greatness," the kind she has been looking for in her quest to escape the slums. When she marries James she thinks she is moving on up in the world. She thinks the

material contrast between the slums and the wealthy world of James Taggart also indicates a moral contrast. But what she eventually discovers is that, in terms of values, the slums of her childhood are frighteningly similar to the rich and powerful world of James and his looter friends. In many ways, Cherryl's character suggests, the looters are no different from common criminals and slum dwellers.

First though, we have to get Cherryl married off to James. We noted earlier that Cherryl is similar to Galt and Hank in that she escaped earlier poverty in an effort to improve her life. But Cherryl shows us the huge divide between the sexes in this book. Men like John were able to go to work and earn money to improve themselves. As a woman, with no money or education, Cherryl has very limited options. Her ticket to rising in the world came in the form of a fairy tale. As in a fairy tale, Cherryl has to wait around for someone to rescue her. After her engagement to James, she is called the "Cinderella girl" in the press. Here our Cinderella is blinded by her "prince," misreading the entire situation:

"I have no right to be afraid of anything. I'm too happy. You see, I always thought that there wasn't any sense in people saying that all you can do in life is suffer. I wasn't going to knuckle down like that and give up. I thought that things could happen which were very beautiful and very great. I didn't expect it to happen to me - not so much and so soon. But I'll try to live up to it." (2.2.3.34)

This passage is important because it reveals the crucial error in Cherryl's thinking: her low self-esteem. Cherryl sets off on a quest to make herself "worthy" of James, not realizing that she is already better than him. Cherryl passively notes that great "things could happen" to her. She doesn't see herself as having the potential or power to *do* great things. As we see in her marriage to James, Cherryl continually and unnecessarily accepts guilt and blame. But Cherryl gradually starts to alter her thinking, and the epiphanies she has help us learn some important truths about the looters and the consequences of their values. As she herself is being educated, Cherryl effectively educates us.

One Night in the Life

It is notable that all of Cherryl's major scenes occur at night: her initial meeting with James, her wedding reception, her suicide. Literally and symbolically, Cherryl is always struggling, trying to make sense of things, in the darkness. It's no mistake that in her introductory scene the words used to describe her are "puzzled" and "stupefied." But Cherryl doesn't want to remain in the dark; instead, she sets out on a quest for understanding:

If you don't know, the thing to do is not to get scared, but to learn. . . . (3.4.1.121)

Cherryl uses this mantra to combat her fears and the increasing doubts she has about James and the wealthy world of "greatness" that she thought she had entered. As Cherryl's understanding grows, so does her horror. In a climactic scene that acts as a catalyst in her suicide, Cherryl that James is a monster.

Then the headlight she had felt rushing upon her hit its goal - and she screamed in the bright explosion of the impact - she screamed in physical terror, backing away from him. (3.4.4.51)

Note the light imagery used in this scene. Cherryl has been in the dark, but now she can finally "see." But the fact that the light is violent - an explosion and the headlights of an oncoming vehicle - underscores how terrible and crushing Cherryl's realization is.

What is awful about Cherryl's illuminating journey is that she gains awareness only to become conscious of how powerless she is. She can't see a way out of her situation. In an important meeting with Dagny, where the two forge a bond, Cherryl seems like she's nearing the point of no return. Dagny tries to build up her confidence and give her hope, but it doesn't really work.

"Yes, I feel that there's no chance for me to exist, if they do...no chance, no room, no world I can cope with....I can't explain what it feels like, I can't catch hold of it - and that's part of the terror, that

you can't catch hold of anything - it's as if the whole world were suddenly destroyed, not by an explosion - an explosion is something hard and solid - but destroyed by...by some horrible kind of softening." (3.4.2.54)

Like Eddie Willer (to whom James notably compared her in this chapter), Cherryl realizes things too late. Just before her suicide, she even wonders where all the "great" men have gone and feels that Dagny is a lonely hero doomed to fail. More than any other character, Cherryl demonstrates the costs of Galt's strike, which has inevitably left some people behind, as well as the consequences of the looters' world, which beat down and destroyed people like her.

Character Timeline

- While working at a dime store, Cherryl meets James Taggart.
- James starts dating her.
- She is humiliated at a party she attends with James.
- James proposes, and she accepts.
- The press labels her "Cinderella Girl."
- She stays in her crappy apartment until the wedding.
- At the wedding, she confronts Dagny and tells her off.
- Cherryl grows to realize the type of man James really is and has fights with him.
- She apologizes to Dagny for her earlier harsh words.
- Dagny tries to help Cherryl overcome her depression.
- Cherryl discovers that James had an affair.
- They have a violent argument and James hits her.
- A despairing Cherryl commits suicide.

Character Analysis: Ragnar Danneskjöld

Aka (also known as):

Ragnar, Ragnar Danneskjöld

Character Analysis

Ahoy mateys! It's time to discuss everyone's favorite pirate: Ragnar. (He even has an "aargh" sound in his name!)

OK, so actually Ragnar is an odd duck. He's like the Ron Weasley of Galt's Golden Trio. Francisco and John hog all the attention, though given how the narrative often filters through Hank and Dagny, this is understandable. They interact most often with John and Francisco, since Ragnar is off pirating. We hear of Ragnar mainly through gossip and the fearful discussions of people commenting on his pirate raids. Ragnar is sort of a mythic figure who inspires dread and confusion.

The pirating itself is confusing, though. Let's check out Dr. Akston's description of Ragnar:

"And Ragnar - you didn't know what profession Ragnar had chosen, Miss Taggart? No, it wasn't a stunt pilot, or jungle explorer, or deep-sea diver. It was something much more outrageous than these. Ragnar intended to be a philosopher. An abstract, theoretical, academic, cloistered, ivory-tower philosopher." (3.2.4.32).

He's a bit like MacGyver - the mild-mannered, quasi-pacifist who often ends up beating people up and getting in and out of "ultra sticky situations" (though technically that's *SNL*'s MacGruber). Ragnar is also eye candy; Dagny describes him like he's a Norse god. So he's a hot, Viking-philosopher-pirate. Is this guy trying to be some sort of perfect Harlequin romance novel hero? Well, not really.

Akston nails it when he describes Ragnar's intended profession as "outrageous." In a world run by looters, being a philosopher and living a life of the mind is a much more risky undertaking than running around as a criminal. In this respect, the bold and dangerous lifestyle Ragnar leads as a pirate with a cause is not very far removed from the lifestyle of a bold and uncompromising philosopher. In both instances, Ragnar is standing up to the looters' bad regime and challenging their values.

In his two big scenes, Ragnar gives a concise and interesting spin on his morals and his role in the strike. As he explains, in the opposite day that is the looters' world, men of the mind become men of the sword:

What I actually am, Mr. Rearden, is a policeman. It is a policeman's duty to protect men from criminals - criminals being those who seize wealth by force. ... But when robbery becomes the purpose of the law...then it is an outlaw who has to become a policeman. (2.7.2.101)

Ragnar's moral crusade has specific targets and beneficiaries as well.

"I'm after a man whom I want to destroy. "

"What man?"

"Robin Hood. ...He was the man who robbed the rich and gave to the poor. Well, I'm the man who robs the poor and gives to the rich - or, to be exact, the man who robs the thieving poor and gives back to the productive rich." (2.7.2.93-97)

More than any of the other strikers, Ragnar has a very concrete notion of justice, and he is on a quest to pay back those who have been "robbed" with bars of gold. It seems the other strike leaders don't fully approve of Ragnar's methods, but that's rather fitting for a would-be renegade philosopher. He's not afraid to go against the crowd.

Character Analysis: Hugh Akston

Aka (also known as):

Hugh Akston, Dr. Akston, Professor Akston, Akston

Character Analysis

If John Galt is the father of the strike, Hugh Akston is its grandfather. Dr. Akston is a highly paternal presence who instructs and guides all the young strikers. It's his intellectual and moral guidance that helps inspire the strike in the first place. His role as the book's primary father figure helps reinforce one of the book's major themes: that people choose and create their own spiritual families, which are more important than actual blood ties.

Family Ties
Hugh Akston considers himself the father of three sons - Galt, Francisco, and Ragnar - and he notably does not use the phrase "like sons" when he speaks of them. To Akston, the three men *are* his sons in all the ways that matter:

"You asked me whether I was proud of the way my three sons had turned out. I am more proud than I had ever hoped to be. I am proud of their every action, of their every goal - and of every value *they've chosen. And* this*, Dagny, is my full answer." The sudden sound of her first name was pronounced in the tone of a father*. (3.2.4.40)

Akston here reveals his willingness to expand his family. He includes Dagny in his family circle as one of his children, and as John's future wife. Dr. Akston here ties into the book's ideas about how families are chosen, as a product of shared values. He represents the kind of family Dagny wants to have, to the point that she rejects her own blood connections and all they connote:

Dagny regretted at times that Nat Taggart was her ancestor. What she felt for him did not belong in the category of unchosen family affections. She did not want her feeling to be the thing one was supposed to owe an uncle or a grandfather. (1.3.2.119)

Blood families here carry with them an obligation, which goes against the values of Galt and Akston, who prefer choice. Akston's values, which he has imparted to and shares with Galt, make him the natural and spiritual father of Galt, Francisco, and Ragnar. Galt and Akston frequently make very similar philosophical statements; their value systems are totally aligned.

Age of Reason
That's an example of us trying to be clever. See, the Age of Reason is a term people use to talk about the European Enlightenment, a period in the 18th century when lots of philosophers ran around preaching about how cool reason is. Dr. Akston is definitely depicted here as a champion of reason.

"Hugh Akston!" the attractive young woman gasped. "But you couldn't have, Senor d'Anconia! You're not old enough. I thought he was one of those great named of...of the last century."

"Perhaps in spirit, madame, not in fact."...A young man said, astonished, "I thought Hugh Akston was one of those classics that nobody studied any more, except in histories of philosophy. I read an article recently which referred to him as the last of the great advocates of reason." (1.6.1.196-204)

This passage helps to set up the strong link between Akston and reason, which other characters like Galt reference throughout the novel. But this passage also introduces us to another crucial aspect of Akston's character: the idea that he belonged to an earlier age, a time when reason was prized. In this way, Akston is linked to the idea of legends of a heroic past age, like Nat Taggart. Akston is also linked to the idea of living legends, which includes figures like Midas Mulligan, who seem to have no place in the modern world of the looters.

Character Analysis: Ellis Wyatt

Aka (also known as):

Ellis, Ellis Wyatt, Wyatt

Character Analysis

Ellis Wyatt is pretty hardcore. He shows the rest of the world what he thinks of them when he torches his own oil fields. He definitely has the most dramatic exit of all the strikers, even more dramatic than Dagny's vandalizing Nat Taggart's statue on her way out. (Fires trump graffiti.) There is more to Ellis Wyatt than rebelliousness and attitude, but you wouldn't guess it at first:

"I came here because I understand you're the only ones with brains in this rotten outfit."

"What can I do for you?"

"You can listen to an ultimatum....So here is my ultimatum: it is now in your power to destroy me. I may have to go; but if I go, I'll make sure that I take all the rest of you along with me." (1.4.7.9-15)

Oh, Ellis. Leave it to him to barge into the office of someone he's never met before (Dagny) and threaten to take her out if she screws him over. He's hardcore, but he's also a brilliant guy with very high standards. It's no mistake that he is the first of the Colorado guys to go on strike. We get the sense pretty early that something may be amiss with Ellis:

She heard the crash of the glass against the wall in the same instant that she saw a circling current...to the terrible violence of his hand that flung the glass across the room. It was not the conventional gesture meant as celebration, it was the gesture of a rebellious anger, the vicious gesture in which movement is substituted for a scream of

pain. (1.8.7.86)

In true rebel fashion, Ellis is angry about everything wrong with the world and lashes out accordingly. But his character undergoes a considerable shift over the course of the book. First off, Ellis is highly present throughout the novel, even when he isn't physically there. He's a bit like John Galt in that respect.

Ellis comes to represent all the people disappearing on strike, and Dagny frequently thinks of those who have disappeared in terms of him. He isn't physically present at all in Volume 2, but a symbol of him is: his Torch. Wyatt's Torch acts as an important recurring symbol throughout the book. It's the last thing the people in the Taggart Tunnel disaster see. Dagny notices it every time she's in Colorado. And it's also featured in the novel's very last scene.

But far in the distance, on the edge of the earth, a small flame was waving in the wind, the defiantly stubborn flame of Wyatt's Torch, twisting, being torn and regaining its hold, not to be uprooted or extinguished. It seemed to be calling and waiting for the words John Galt was now to pronounce.

"The road is cleared," said Galt. "We are going back to the world." (3.10.3.9-10)

Wyatt's Torch symbolizes Galt's entire quest and the resistant strikers who refused to be "extinguished," so to speak. It makes sense that Wyatt himself is also linked to one of the most important themes of the strike: the idea of "manufacturing time." We'll let Ellis explain it:

"The two hours I saved are mine - as pricelessly mine as if I moved my grave two further hours away from every five I've got. It's two hours released from one task, to be invested in another - two more hours in which to work, to grow, to move forward. That's the savings account I'm hoarding." (3.1.1.164)

Galt's strike is largely about giving people their time back: time in which to lead full and happy lives rather than time wasted

slaving away for a regime of looters. It makes sense that Ellis, as sort of the chief Colorado striker, is the one who expresses that idea clearly to Dagny. He also explicitly ties together the ideas of time and growth. This Ellis Wyatt, with time to spare, is a much happier and calmer individual than the furious and rebellious man we meet at the start of the novel. Ellis helps to demonstrate how Galt's strike is as much about helping individuals as it is about grand philosophical ideals.

Character Analysis: Jeff Allen

Aka (also known as):

Jeff Allen, Jeff, the tramp

Character Analysis

Often simply called "the tramp," Jeff Allen is a man who has fallen on seriously bad times. His sole purpose in the book is to tell Dagny the story of the decline and fall of the Twentieth Century Motor Factory. Jeff Allen is sort of like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the Ancient Mariner wanders the earth telling his tragic personal story, almost as if he were compelled to. Jeff definitely seems compelled to tell his story to Dagny.

Jeff is also something of an Ishmael, like the narrator of *Moby-Dick*. The epilogue of what is essentially Ishmael's tale is titled with a quote from the Biblical Book of Job: "And I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee." In a way, Jeff Allen is the lone survivor of the wreckage that is Starnesville. He's held on to enough of his humanity, and his sanity, to impart his lessons to Dagny. It's significant that when he concludes his narrative, we don't hear him speak much anymore, except to tell Dagny his name (his very own "call me Ishmael" moment).

Jeff Allen delivers a lengthy, uninterrupted monologue of the events of the Twentieth Century Motor Factory, finally giving us a straight answer about who John Galt is and answering a ton of Dagny's long-standing questions. The Factory was sort of like the country in microcosm, and Jeff comments on the tragedy that occurred there, where decent people unknowingly destroyed themselves:

And if anybody had any doubts, he felt guilty and kept his mouth shut. Because they made it sound like anyone who'd oppose the plan

was a child-killer at heart and less than a human being. They told us that this plan would achieve a noble ideal. Well, how were we to know otherwise? Hadn't we heard it all our lives . . .? (2.10.1.93)

Like many characters in the novel, Jeff discovered the awful truth about the morals he had learned all his life by living through the ultimate destruction those morals brought about.

Character Analysis: Mayor Bascom

Aka (also known as):

Mayor Bascom, the Mayor

Character Analysis

The Mayor of Rome, Wisconsin, a town approaching Starnesville status, is one of the first people that Hank and Dagny track down regarding the Motor Factory. While the mayor puts them on the trail of Eugene Lawson, who plays a considerable role in the book later on, that isn't his most important role. The Mayor becomes significant at the end of his one scene, when he notes that Dagny isn't Hank's wife:

Dagny saw Rearden's face go white..."Keep your dirty -" he began, but she stepped between them.

. . . Mayor Bascom looked astonished by Rearden's reaction; he had made the remark without malice, merely like a fellow cheat displaying his shrewdness to his partners in guilt. "Lady, I've seen a lot in my lifetime," he said good-naturedly. "Married people don't look as if they have a bedroom on their minds when they look at each other. In this world, either you're virtuous or you enjoy yourself. Not both, lady, not both." (1.10.2.37-41)

The Mayor gives us insight into how society would view Hank and Dagny's affair. These views also echo the ones Hank spouted off, and possibly even recited, to Dagny the morning after they first slept together. Dagny uses this incident to ask Hank to reconsider his own views.

Hank comes away from this incident feeling guilty and protective of Dagny, which is a character trait that comes back in spades when he is confronted with the Gift Certificate blackmail. Though Hank's views evolve and become different

from those held by the Mayor, his protectiveness of Dagny seems to intensify as the book proceeds. This scene is notable for being one of the first instances where that aspect of Hank's character emerges full force.

Character Analysis: Luke Beal

Aka (also known as):

Luke Beal, Luke

Character Analysis

Luke was the fireman aboard the Comet when it entered the tunnel, and he was the only person to escape the tragedy alive. Luke's account is the one Dagny hears on the radio at her cabin. His story and the news coverage of the disaster prompt Dagny to return to work after almost quitting for good.

Character Analysis: Orren Boyle

Aka (also known as):

Orren Boyle, Orren

Character Analysis

Just as Wesley Mouch epitomizes the villainous politician in the book, Orren Boyle represents the bad businessman. We start getting hints at how corrupt Orren is from the very start. He badly mismanages his business, as we learn from some of his victims:

"I think there's something phony about the way Mr. Boyle runs his business. I can't understand what he's after. They've got half their furnaces idle, but last month there were all those big stories about Associated Steel in the newspapers. About their output? Why, no - about the wonderful housing project that Mr. Boyle's just built for his workers." (1.7.9.74)

What is Orren after? Well, like most looters he wants to reap the benefits of doing nothing. His idea of good business is shady backdoor deals and get-rich-quick schemes on the stock market. His press coverage is just that: coverage. It conceals his corruption and inaction.

Most of Orren's scenes occur with his frenemy James. They complain about each other, take joy in one-upping each another, and show that the "morals" of the looters are basically a load of garbage. Here's a sampling of their friendship. Orren starts us off after James calls him his "boy":

"I don't mind the age classifications, I know I look young for my years, but I'm just allergic to pronouns."

"That's very smart, but you're going to get too smart one of these

days."

"If I do, you just go ahead and make the most of it, Jimmy. If."

"The trouble with people who overreach themselves is that they have short memories."

[This goes on for a while. Then they start with the accusations and the sniping:]

Because you spent ten thousand dollars pouring liquor into people you hoped would prevent the directive about the bond moratorium!...But what the hell! - it's all right with me, that's the way to share things around, only don't you try to fool me, Jimmy. Save the act for the suckers. (2.2.4.14-20)

Classic. These two are snippy enough to have their own sitcom. We later learn that Orren has fallen out of favor, and it seems by the end of the book that James has ascended to the position of chief industrial dude. This is fitting, given how cutthroat and corrupt the looters' world is. James and Orren couldn't both survive on top for long - like Harry Potter and Voldemort and their whole "neither can live while the other survives" prophecy. James and Orren would be like those two if Harry Potter and Voldemort were corrupt, mildly alcoholic businessmen who enjoyed one-upping each other and then criticizing each other for their botched schemes.

Character Analysis: Laura Bradford

Aka (also known as):

Laura Bradford, Laura

Character Analysis

Laura is Kip Chalmer's mistress and is shown to be a very whiny and obnoxious woman. She and Kip obviously have a lot of contempt for each other, and this tiny glimpse into their relationship helps contrast their views of sex and the self with the positive and loving sexual relationships in which people like John and Dagny engage.

Character Analysis: Bill Brent

Aka (also known as):

Bill Brent, Bill

Character Analysis

Bill is a long-time Taggart employee, like Pat Logan. Like Pat, Bill also walks off the job when he realizes what is happening and how deadly a risk people are taking just to pacify some idiot from Washington. Bill's refusal to cooperate throws Dave Mitchum for a massive loop and results in a young and overly impressionable employee being forced to carry out the order Bill refused.

Character Analysis: Kip Chalmers

Aka (also known as):

Kip Chalmers, Kip

Character Analysis

Kip is a looter politician who is largely to blame for the disaster. He is on his way to a campaign rally when the train he is on breaks down. In his impatience to get moving again, and his refusal to listen to facts, Kip threatens everyone within earshot with the wrath of Washington if they don't get him to his rally on time. Kip has serious entitlement issues:

"If you don't get me an engine and don't start that train, you can kiss goodbye to your jobs, your work permits and this whole goddamn railroad!" (2.7.3.54)

Charming. In the days before YouTube, Kip could totally get away with this and still run for public office. With fear of reprisals driving them, the Taggart Transcontinental employees involved here make deadly decisions. Kip is also shown to be not just a jerk politician but someone with bad morals: he's traveling with his mistress and some other questionable people. Kip demonstrates the negative influence that Washington has over people in this novel.

Character Analysis: Dan Conway

Aka (also known as):

Dan Conway, Dan

Character Analysis

Poor Dan is the businessman who didn't quite make it. He ran everyone's favorite Old West sounding railroad, the Phoenix-Durango, which mainly provided service in Colorado. But Dan was the unfortunate victim of one of the looters' early laws, an absurd regulation that prevented him from conducting business in Colorado. Dan doesn't get angry and quit and set his trains on fire (a la Ellis Wyatt). Instead, he becomes confused and sad. He's beaten down and he accepts his defeat. It's never clear if Galt ever tried to get to him; perhaps Galt didn't feel his morals were properly squared away.

[Dan:] "Dagny, the whole world's in a terrible state right now. I don't know what's wrong with it, but something's very wrong. Men have to get together and find a way out. But who's to decide which way to take, unless it's the majority? I guess that's the only fair method of deciding, I don't see any other. I suppose somebody's got to be sacrificed. If it turned out to be me, I have no right to complain." (1.4.6.24)

Dan provides us with yet another picture of what happens to decent people in a world run by, and largely defined by, people like the looters. He has taken in their rhetoric about "sacrifice" and the "majority" even if he doesn't fully believe it. He just can't see any other way of doing things.

Dan can't resolve the contradiction between what he feels is right and what he's been taught. However, we do get a sign that he gets some of his mojo back, when we learn that he refused to sell James Taggart his railroad in Colorado. That sends James

into a tizzy, although sneezing probably prompts hysterics from him, so there you go. The point is that while Dan may not have been an active member of the strike, he did share many of its views and values, and he set out to live independently, if quietly and sadly, from the looters.

Character Analysis: Ken Danagger

Aka (also known as):

Ken, Ken Danagger Mr. Danagger

Character Analysis

We would totally be BFFs with Ken. First off, he has a great last name. Sounds like Danger. Second, he's a fan of Hank. And third, he gets some of the best scenes in the whole book, and he's not even around all that much. Why give Ken such good material? Well, he helps demonstrate the benefits of going on strike in terms of personal relationships.

When we first meet Ken, he's a detached, stern older guy who's willing to go to the mats for Hank. He's very no-nonsense and is described as not having friends or family. But then Dagny encounters him after his "conversion" conversation with John Galt:

It was not the face she had seen in the courtroom, it was not the face she had known for years as a countenance of unchanging, unfeeling rigidity - it was a face which a young man of twenty should hope for, but could not achieve, a face from which every sign of strain had been wiped out...to form a composition of hope, eagerness, and guiltless serenity: the theme was deliverance. (2.3.5.39)

Ken Danagger further emphasizes the nature of his change by giving Dagny a message for Hank before he disappears:

"Will you tell him that I...You see, I've never cared for people, yet he was always the man I respected, but I didn't know until today that what I felt was...that he was the only man I ever loved." (2.3.5.98)

There's a lot going on here. Ken is the only striker we see immediately after his conversion, so this scene highlights the

process for us and shows us how important a total life is to Galt. Galt's idea of life is about loving work and having time for friends and emotions and downtime. Freed from the burdens of working for the looters, Ken is now able to regain his youth and fully express his emotions.

Danagger also ties into the theme of brother-love through his relationship with Hank. We often see brotherly love abused in book, like Philip with Hank and James with Dagny. Ken shows us a genuine love and respect for a friend, or what brotherly love should be.

The final thing to note about the supposedly "unfeeling" Ken Danagger is his deep compassion, which the strike helps unleash. When Dagny arrives in Atlantis he plays the role of a very supportive friend, telling her that she's done well and encouraging her to lay down her burdens. Who knew Ken had it in him? Well apparently Galt did, since the strike is what got Ken to open up emotionally. Ken shows us how the strike is more than just a political quest.

Character Analysis: The d'Anconias

Aka (also known as):

the d'Anconias

Character Analysis

We only hear of three d'Anconias in the book: Francisco's father and his two famous ancestors Sebastián d'Anconia and his wife. Francisco's father has a lot in common with the Taggarts. He seems like a good man, and Francisco is quite loyal to him. However, even though he is proud of his son, Francisco's father seems rather confused by Francisco's ability and ambition. There's something of a disconnect between father and son, similar to Dagny's disconnect with her mother. Francisco's father died when he was quite young; this helped precipitate Francisco's disillusionment with the world and led him to join Galt's crusade a few years later.

Analogy time: Francisco is to his famous ancestors as Dagny is to Nat Taggart. In other words, Sebastián d'Anconia and his wife inspire Francisco in his life's work. And Sebastián's rather epic love story also serves as a template for the hopes that Francisco harbors for his relationship with Dagny.

Character Analysis: Quentin Daniels

Aka (also known as):

Quentin Daniels, Quentin

Character Analysis

Quentin is sort of like the kid brother of the strike. He's like Robin to the strike's League of Super Friends. And if Eddie Willers had been a super genius, he might have been this kid.

Quentin is directly linked to Dagny's quest to find the motor. If we take the motor as a metaphor for Galt's value system, then Quentin is essentially educating himself. So it's fitting that he figures nearly everything out on his own and barely needs Galt's guidance:

"I do not wish to work in a world that regards me as a slave any longer. I do not wish to be of any value to people.... I would not take it upon my conscience that anything produced by my mind should be used to bring them comfort." (2.9.1.151)

Galt even notes later that Quentin barely needed any help at all - he intuitively understood Galt's value system. Galt's philosophy of life is tied to childhood; it seeks to recapture and to express the optimistic and joyful view of the world that people hold as children. When Quentin arrives in Atlantis he seems filled with childlike glee:

The driver leaped out, raced up the path and rushed into the room, not pausing to ring or knock. It took her a moment to realize that the eager, breathless, disheveled young man was Quentin Daniels.

. . ."Isn't he great - Midas Mulligan? That's what I want to be when I reach his age. I want to make money. I want to make millions. I want to make as much as he did!" (3.1.1.49-59)

Young in age and spirit, Quentin Daniels is able to grasp Galt's value system almost instinctively.

Character Analysis: Balph Eubank

Aka (also known as):

Balph Eubank, Balph

Character Analysis

Balph probably wins the award for stupidest name in the whole book. At least the Nickname Looters crowd had real names that weren't quite as silly. Balph is just ridiculous. And he obviously has some problems with his name: we get a couple of places where he snidely corrects people who get it wrong.

Balph is an author, and though he didn't write our favorite fake book, *The Vulture Is Molting*, he wrote something that comes a close second:

"What is the name of your new novel?" asked the wealthy woman.
"*The Heart is a Milkman*"
"What is it about?"
"Frustration." (1.6.1.83-86)

Balph seems to love Lillian Rearden, which is another definite strike against him in this novel. Overall he's shown to be a very snobby and needy person. He often accosts James, asking for his approval, and presumably his protection in the cutthroat world of the looters. Balph shows us what a sorry low arts and culture have sunk to in the country.

Character Analysis: Dr. Floyd Ferris

Aka (also known as):

Dr. Floyd Ferris, Dr. Ferris

Character Analysis

Dr. Ferris is a member, along with Wesley and James, of what we like to call the trio of evil. While James embodies evil business and Wesley evil politics, Ferris is here to represent evil science. Among the three of them, we get a good idea of the looters' ideology, the types of people in power, and the impact they have on national life.

In terms of influence, Ferris might the most powerful of the three. He's also one of the most outspokenly cynical of the looters. He often cuts through all the ideological rhetoric and gets to the heart of the matter: he has great contempt for people and is basically in it for power. Oddly enough, one of his most revealing scenes occurs not with his fellow looters but with his nemesis Hank Rearden:

"We're after power and we mean it. You fellows were pikers, but we know the real trick, and you'd better get wise to it. There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them...you create a nation of lawbreakers - and then you cash in on guilt. Now that's the system, Mr. Rearden." (2.2.3.39)

This is probably the best statement of the looters' government system in the entire novel. Ferris comes right out and says exactly what the looters are doing and what they hope to achieve: power. What's interesting is Ferris's tone here. He speaks to Hank in this scene as if Hank is a total idiot who is hopelessly behind the times. Ferris actually relishes this type of

criminal system and doesn't understand why a "smart" man like Hank won't get with the program.

This isn't to say that Ferris never uses ideology, though. He often fires off the same hollow phrases and ideals that people like James Taggart embrace. But while James clings to such phrases as a life-preserver, Ferris uses them as a way to mock those around him. Here's an example of a scene with Dr. Stadler:

Dr. Ferris did nothing, he merely looked at Dr. Stadler calmly; but the calm gave him an air that was almost patronizing. "Now, you see, Dr. Stadler, you're speaking as if this book were addressed to a thinking audience. If it were, one would have to be concerned with such matters as accuracy, validity, logic, and the prestige of science. But it isn't. It's addressed to the public. And you have always been the first to believe that the public does not think. He paused but Dr. Stadler said nothing. (2.1.1.75)

Ferris here throws Stadler's beliefs back in his face, showing him the logical extremes to which Stadler's contempt of the "public" can be taken.

In the end, Ferris uses his power and influence over the country's science and technology to create weapons and ways of terrorizing people into submission. He's the character who pushes for Galt's torture. Ferris shows us what some men of intelligence and ability can become in a system like the looters'.

Character Analysis: Richard Halley

Aka (also known as):

Richard Halley, Halley

Character Analysis

Richard Halley is another of the book's legendary figures. At the beginning of the novel, he is almost not even a "real" character at all. We hardly hear his name when it's not linked to his concertos, which act as motifs in the novel. In a way, Halley's music is more important than he is. But since Galt preaches that a person's work reflects who they are, Halley is, through his music, one of the most important figures in the novel. (To read more about music in the novel, check out the "Symbols, Allegory, Imagery" section.)

Halley's music is particularly important to Dagny. Her character is introduced in conjunction with Halley and his music:

She thought dimly that there had been premonitory echoes of this theme in all of Richard Halley's work, through all the years of his long struggle, to the day, in his middle-age, when fame struck him suddenly and knocked him out. This - she thought, listening to the symphony - had been the goal of his struggle. ...when Richard Halley wrote this, he...She sat up straight. When *did Richard Halley write this?* (1.1.2.7)

It's significant that Halley wrote his *Fifth Concerto*, which Dagny hears for the first time here, after arriving in Atlantis. In a way, Halley had to be freed from the world of the looters before he could reach his full artistic potential. We get various mentions of contrasts between Halley's rebellious *Fourth Concerto* (written in the real world) and his triumphant *Fifth Concerto*, written in Atlantis.

Halley is also the first mystery we encounter in the novel. As we see in the above passage, his disappearance remains highly mysterious, and his *Fifth Concerto* is also a mysterious part of the strike that Dagny spends the first two volumes tracking down.

So actually meeting Halley is a bit of a shock for us, as it is for Dagny. Since Dagny is his number-one fan, Halley gives her a private concert and explains his view of art, which fits into Galt's value system, where all work is work "of the mind." Halley knocks down distinctions between business and art and emphasizes the importance of values, both in writing his music and in the enjoyment it produces.

"But I mean it," said Richard Halley, smiling. "I'm a businessman and I never do anything without payment. You've paid me. Do you see why I wanted to play for you tonight?. . . I don't mean your enjoyment, I don't mean your emotions - emotions be damned! - I mean your understanding, and the fact that your enjoyment was of the same nature as mine, that it came from the same source: from your intelligence, from the conscious judgment of a mind able to judge my work by the standard of the same values that went to write it." (3.2.4.3-7)

Halley may not have been able to exist in "real" world, but he can exist in the world Atlantis is building, which is the lesson his music teaches.

Character Analysis: Lawrence Hammond

Aka (also known as):

Lawrence Hammond, Hammond

Character Analysis

Like Dagny, Hammond was in the transportation business (automobiles) before going on strike. Hammond's snazzy cars are actually featured in the novel more than Hammond himself, which is rather appropriate. Galt's philosophy says that people are defined by their work, so Hammond's cars are a fitting stand-in for the man himself. In Galt's Atlantis hideaway, Hammond runs the grocery store, which Dagny finds shocking. Hammond is providing an essential service, though: food. In the "real world" he provided the essential service of transportation, and his new role as a grocery store owner helps reorient Dagny to life in the valley, where any sort of useful work, no matter how unglamorous, is a good thing.

Character Analysis: Pop Harper

Aka (also known as):

Pop Harper, Pop

Character Analysis

Another snapshot, one-off character, Pop Harper has only one scene in the first chapter of the book. A depressed and stressed-out Eddie is leaving the office when he spies Pop Harper trying to repair his own typewriter. Pop delivers a spiel about how the country and the whole world are falling apart, and his typewriter, which keeps breaking, is a symbol of everything that's wrong. Pop fits well in the early part of the book, which did a lot to set up and emphasize themes of decline and decay.

Character Analysis: Mr. and Mrs. William Hastings

Aka (also known as):

Mr. Hastings, William Hastings, Mrs. Hastings

Character Analysis

We only hear about William Hastings from other people, since he died before the novel started. Hastings was Galt's boss at the Factory and one of the earliest people to join Galt's strike. From what we hear from Mrs. Hastings, William was an honest, hard-working man. What's really interesting about him, though, are the things that remain inferred and unspoken.

First off, we know Mr. Hastings must have been a pretty incredible guy for John Galt to work under him and invite him to join his strike in its early days. Second, Hastings didn't just jump at the opportunity to join the strike. We hear about his struggle from Mrs. Hastings, who apparently never learned anything about the strike or those involved, and from Midas Mulligan.

Mr. Hastings took a year before finally deciding to join the strike. Perhaps he was holding out so long because of his wife. It seems that those without any family connections had an easier time joining the strike than those with families to consider. This isn't true for everyone, of course, but it adds an interesting complication to Hastings's character. He's actually a lot like Dagny, in that it took him a very long time to decide to join the strike. He was sort of the first holdout.

Character Analysis: Dr. Hendricks

Aka (also known as):

Dr. Hendricks, Hendricks

Character Analysis

A famous surgeon who joined the strike early on, Dr. Hendricks cares for Dagny after she is injured in her plane crash and also gives us some interesting information about the state of health care in the country. Hendricks's story is pretty interesting. Here's what Hendricks says about his reasons for quitting:

"Do you know what it takes to perform a brain operation? Do you know the kind of skill it demands, and the years of passionate, merciless, excruciating devotion that go to acquire the skill? That was what I could not place at the disposal of men whose sole qualifications to rule me was their capacity to spout the fraudulent generalities that got them elected to the privilege of enforcing their wishes at the point of a gun." (3.1.2.59)

Like the other strikers, Hendricks felt that he couldn't practice his work effectively in the real world. However, Hendricks in particular raises some tricky ethical issues about the nature of the strike. His innovative research could save many lives, but he is effectively withholding it from people during the strike. Are Hendricks' actions moral? Is he breaking the doctor's Hippocratic Oath? Regardless of your opinion - and we could see arguments going either way here - Hendricks as a character gives us insight into a profession that isn't dealt with much in the novel (medicine) and he also brings up some interesting questions about the strike as a whole.

Character Analysis: Tinky Holloway

Aka (also known as):

Tinky Holloway, Tinky

Character Analysis

Tinky is another of the "nickname era" looters, albeit one who is referred to much more than he is featured. In fact, the only really substantial sequence we get with him is at a Washington meeting with Hank Rearden. Unlike some of his other nickname brethren, Tinky much less prone to violence.

"Our Plan is really very simple," said Tinky Holloway, striving to prove it by the gaily bouncing simplicity of his voice. (3.6.1.235)

Like many of the looters, Tinky tries to use his words to control the world. He lives in denial and seems to think that saying things in a certain way will make them true.

Tinky seems to be more in the looter-of-the-spirit camp, which emphasizes charity, humanitarianism, and ideology, in contrast to the materialist looters like Cuffy Meigs. Tinky is thus linked to people like James, Eugene Lawson, and Bertram Scudder, whom we later learn Tinky screwed over in a power struggle.

Tinky and Chick are in opposing factions, which is rather fitting. Cuffy's force contrasts to Tinky's more mild-mannered but still dangerous approach. Tinky might not shoot you, but he will definitely rob you, manipulate you, blackmail you, and leave you to starve.

Character Analysis: Lee Hunsacker

Aka (also known as):

Lee Hunsacker, Hunsacker

Character Analysis

Hunsacker was the owner of the dubiously named Amalgamated Services Inc., which took over the Factory after the Starnes children abandoned it. Hunsacker is directly responsible for Mulligan and Narragansett going on strike. He sued Mulligan for a loan, and when Judge Narragansett ruled against him, he found another judge to overturn the ruling. Here's his justification for his lawsuit:

"Why did my plans for my own future have to depend upon the arbitrary opinion of a selfish monopolist? I wasn't going to stand for that. I brought suit against him." (1.10.6.32).

Hunsacker is spoiled and has serious entitlement issues, as evidenced by this lawsuit. Actually, he would fit in very well in today's world. He likes his litigation, he seems like a media whore (if his scrapbook of articles about himself is any indication), and he's writing his own memoirs. This guy would totally do a reality TV show.

Character Analysis: Gwen Ives

Aka (also known as):

Miss Ives, Gwen, Gwen Ives

Character Analysis

Along with Dagny, Kay, and Cherryl, Gwen is one of the few good women (actually, one of the few women) that we meet in the book. As Hank Rearden's efficient and professional secretary, she's also the only other woman besides Dagny to be shown having a job and doing it well. Gwen represents the working girls of the country, women who aren't in positions of power or notoriety like Dagny but who are still trying to do a good job in spite of being surrounded by corrupt people. Gwen is quite loyal to Hank and she often gets emotional on his behalf. This is significant, since Gwen is otherwise a very cool and collected individual.

Tears were running down her face, against her resistance, beyond her control.

She saw him and said dryly, guiltily, in apology, "I'm sorry, Mr. Rearden," not attempting the futile pretense of hiding her face.

He approached her. "Thank you," he said gently. . . .As she looked at him, her mouth relaxed a little. The victim whom she could not protect was her only point of reassurance in a world dissolving around her. (1.7.9.104-111)

Notably, Gwen is one of the very few young people in this book who manages to resist the looters' ideology on their own. She isn't part of the strike in any way, but Hank tells her to make a run for it before he goes off to join the strike. So we have hope that Gwen escaped somewhere safe to wait for the strikers to return. Though her part in the book is rather small, Gwen

provides us with a small picture of hope for the future.

Character Analysis: Gilbert Keith-Worthing

Aka (also known as):

Gilbert Keith-Worthing, Gilbert

Character Analysis

A British intellectual turned expat, Gilbert is an aging elitist who voices communist doctrine and enjoys making grandiose statements. He is the quintessential example of the intellectual who uses his brains and influence to accomplish bad things:

He had been considered profound for uttering such things as: "Freedom? Do let's stop talking about freedom. Freedom is impossible....[Man] can never be free from the tyranny of nature. So why should he object to the tyranny of a political dictatorship?" (2.7.3.15).

Gilbert Keith-Worthing is rather implicitly compared in his scenes to the type of misguided scholarly people who supported tyrannical groups like the Nazis.

Character Analysis: Owen Kellogg

Aka (also known as):

Owen Kellogg, Owen

Character Analysis

Owen has the distinction of being the very first striker we meet, although we don't realize it at the time. In fact, for a long time we're not really sure what this guy's deal is. When Dagny offers him a promotion, he quits to go load equipment onto trucks and work as a transient laborer.

We finally realize he's involved somehow with the people who are disappearing, but we still don't get what exactly he's doing until Dagny crashes is Answer Land, otherwise known as Atlantis.

Dagny shares a very important scene with Owen just before she chases after Quentin in a plane. She meets Owen by chance on a frozen train and the two set off into the night to find a telephone. As they walk, Dagny grills Owen and tries to figure out his motives. He gives us some interesting clues into his philosophy and his links to the strike:

She noticed that Kellogg, too, stood looking back at the headlight.

They glanced at each other, but said nothing.... With a coldly intentional movement, he kicked the telephone instrument and sent it rolling into a ditch; the violence of the noise shattered the vacuum.

"God damn him," he said evenly, not raising his voice, with a loathing past any display of emotion. "He probably didn't feel like attending to his job, and since he needed his pay check, nobody had the right to ask that he keep the phones in order."

"Come on," she said.

"We can rest if you feel tired, Miss Taggart."

"I'm all right. We have no time to feel tired."

"That's our great error, Miss Taggart. We ought to take the time, some day." (2.10.2.155-61)

There's a ton going on in this scene. We see evidence of the camaraderie between Dagny and Owen here - both seem to feel the headlight is a beacon of safety in the darkness, for instance. Owen also expresses a lot of Galt's value system here: he gets angry at incompetence and the idea of rewarding "need," and he suggests the importance of taking time to feel things and to be yourself.

Owen is also an interesting figure in that he is one of the strikers who still lives most of the year in the outside world. Unlike the Colorado crowd, who had to flee to Atlantis to avoid government reprisals for quitting, Owen only spends one month a year there. His display of violent anger is reminiscent of Ellis Wyatt before Ellis came to Atlantis. Clearly, it's hard to live as a striker in the outside world.

Character Analysis: Fred Kinnan

Aka (also known as):

Fred Kinnan, Fred

Character Analysis

Fred is one of the book's most outspokenly cynical characters. Like Floyd Ferris, he doesn't mind cutting through the crap and admitting to what's really going on, which people like James and Eugene Lawson find horrible and upsetting. Fred sums himself and his role in the world up quite nicely here:

"I'm a racketeer - but I know it and my boys know it, and they know that I'll pay off. Not out of the kindness of my heart, either, and not a cent more than I can get away with.... Sure it makes me sick sometimes, it makes me sick right now, but it's not me who's built this kind of world - you did - so I'm playing the game as you've set it up and I'm going to play it for as long as it lasts - which isn't going to be long for any of us." (2.6.1.111)

Unlike Dr. Ferris, Fred is very much a pragmatist. He isn't ideological at all; he's just trying to survive in whatever system happens to be in power. While Ferris quotes party lines and rhetoric (however ironically) Kinnan makes sarcastic and cutting comments that blast meaningless rhetoric to smithereens and send people like James into hysterics.

"Say," asked Kinnan, "how is the emergency to end if everything is to stand still?"

"Don't be theoretical," said Mouch impatiently. (2.6.1.187-8)

Fred Kinnan has some of the funniest dialogue in the book. Granted, it's dark humor, but it's still funny.

Fred is also the first to concede something akin to defeat to John Galt, pragmatist that he is. Overall, Fred Kinnan really stands out among the looters for being willing to say what many of them are thinking: they're in it for the power, and they're all doomed.

Character Analysis: Paul Larkin

Aka (also known as):

Paul Larkin, Paul

Character Analysis

Though he plays a fairly sizable role at the beginning of the novel, Paul Larkin disappears around halfway through. In a way, his absence from the action does more to characterize him than his presence.

First off, Paul is a rather ineffectual businessman who took over Hank's ore mines after the Equalization of Opportunity Bill passed. So Paul was never really a big presence in the Washington Looter Club. He's similar to Philip Rearden in that he wasn't really involved in politics. Both sort of hung on the fringes of things and were used by other looters because of their ties to Hank Rearden.

This lack of a presence in Washington is likely the reason for Paul's absence later on in the novel. He got squeezed out of the increasingly cutthroat Washington circles. Paul seemed like a nice enough guy, but he was very weak:

"I wish we didn't have to hurt anybody."

"That is an anti-social attitude," drawled Taggart. . . .

"But I'm a student of history," said Larkin hastily. "I recognize historical necessity."

"Good," said Taggart.

"I can't be expected to buck the trend of the whole world, can I?" Larkin seemed to plead, but the plea was not addressed to anyone.

(1.3.1.59-63)

Paul's wishy-washy behavior, and the fact that he let Washington dictate his business for him, eventually helped run Rearden ore and the entire Great Lakes shipping industry into the ground. Paul demonstrates the frighteningly vast consequences that can result from a weak-minded person content to follow.

Character Analysis: Eugene Lawson

Aka (also known as):

Eugene Lawson, Eugene

Character Analysis

Eugene Lawson might just be the worst banker ever. Eugene is a pro at making bad investments. He dumped a lot of money into the Twentieth Century Motor Factory when it was under bad management. When the factory crashed it took Eugene's bank with it, which in turn nearly took out the entire state of Wisconsin. Well, if you're going to crash, at least do it with panache.

Like a roach, Eugene emerged and scurried off to a cozy job in Washington at the Bureau of Economic Planning. Eugene is a looter of the spirit, a humanitarian in words but a sadist in actions. Dagny at one point says that he has "charity-lust" (3.5.1.32). And Eugene often uses words of humanitarianism to express very cruel ideas:

"It's a great responsibility," said Eugene Lawson, "to hold the decision of life or death over thousands of people and to sacrifice them when necessary, but we must have the courage to do it." His soft lips seemed to twist into a smile. (3.5.4.12)

Yikes. Similar to James Taggart in many respects, Eugene wants people to love him and seems to think that being charitable and "democratic" is a way to accomplish this:

"I knew them all. It was the men that interested me, not machines. I was concerned with the human side of industry, not the cash-register side. . . .They all knew me by sight. I used to come into the shops and they would wave and shout, 'Hello, Gene.'" (3.10.5.12-14)

Eugene's problem is that he doesn't seem to love anyone back. Like James, Eugene is prone to hysterics. Also like James, he seems afraid of seeing and understanding too much. His aim seems to be to live in a happy humanitarian bubble of self-denial.

Character Analysis: Mort Liddy

Aka (also known as):

Mort Liddy, Mort

Character Analysis

Mort plays a small role at Hank's anniversary party, but it's one that sets off a huge chain reaction, so to speak. Mort is a hack composer who turns up the radio so everybody can hear a great new song - a mangled version of Richard Halley's *Fourth Concerto*. This horrifies Dagny. Right after this, Dagny spies Lillian wearing Hank's Rearden Metal bracelet. She marches up to her and demands that she exchange it for Dagny's diamond bracelet. This is a huge character moment for Lillian, Hank, and Dagny. So aside from further demonstrating the decline of the arts, Mort acts as a catalyst for one of the book's most important scenes.

Character Analysis: Clifton Locey

Aka (also known as):

Clifton Locey, Clifton

Character Analysis

Clifton Locey is a trained seal, according to Eddie Willers (2.7.1.1). We think this is a great description. Clifton, who is appointed to Dagny's job after she temporarily quits, is clearly a moron. If the relatively mild-mannered Eddie is calling him a trained seal, we know he has to be pretty bad.

Clifton is a pal of James's, which is a strike against him. He's also the one who sends out the initial order to send the Taggart Comet through the tunnel as fast as possible with "whatever" engine is available. Consummate looter that he is, Clifton words the order so that Dave Mitchum will understand he is to use the coal engine. But the order is also vague enough that Clifton can't be blamed for anything that goes wrong. Clifton quickly runs off after sending the order so that no one can contact him for a follow-up.

Character Analysis: Pat Logan

Aka (also known as):

Pat Logan, Logan

Character Analysis

Logan is the engineer who wins the drawing to drive the first John Galt Line train on opening day. An older company man, Logan is serious and devoted to his job, but he also has a very dry sense of humor:

"Mr. Logan, do you have any children? Did you take out any extra insurance? I'm just thinking of the bridge you know."

"Don't cross that bridge till I come to it," Pat Logan answered contemptuously. (1.8.6.19-20)

Logan definitely fits in well with the type of people Dagny likes and admires.

What's remarkable about his character, though, is that this once-devoted company man becomes part of the frozen-train phenomenon. He walks off the train Dagny is taking to Utah in an effort to stop Quentin Daniels from leaving. The fact that a man like Logan becomes a deserter is very telling about the state of the country and the lengths people would go to in order to survive.

It's also interesting that we see so many of the older Taggart Transcontinental employees, whom Dagny seems to prefer over the younger ones. This may be a way to demonstrate how the country's educational system has gone down the toilet. The young people we see are either relegated to menial jobs, like Quentin Daniels, or are shuffled into stooge positions in Washington, like the Wet Nurse. Logan is sort of the last of a

dying breed.

Character Analysis: The Looters

Aka (also known as):

looters

Character Analysis

We have a lot of people who fit into this category in the book. Many of them are only featured in one scene, while others keep popping up like bad pennies. The vast majority of these men, and a few women, are scarcely characterized at all. But this revolving door of looters is doing more than just mimic a few seasons of *Law and Order*. The sheer number of looters shows the instability of the government's system. When corruption and backstabbing are the norm, it stands to reason that there will be lots of power shifts. People rise onto the scene and disappear; others hang in there till the bitter end. The types of looters we get from the beginning till the end of the novel also differ as well, demonstrating the way the government grows worse and moves closer toward outright criminal activity.

Character Analysis: Kay Ludlow

Aka (also known as):

Kay Ludlow, Kay

Character Analysis

For the most part, the novel focuses on industrialists and businesspeople. But artists are also a part of Galt's strike, as we discover in Atlantis. Art is an important part of Galt's philosophy, since it's a type of work that expresses a person's values.

Kay Ludlow is one of the few artists profiled in great detail. She left the real world for artistic as well as gender reasons:

"Whatever quality of human greatness I have the talent to portray - that was the quality the outer world sought to degrade. They let me play nothing but symbols of depravity, nothing but harlots, dissipation-chasers, and home-wreckers, always to be beaten at the end by the little girl next door, personifying the virtue of mediocrity." (3.2.4.15)

In Atlantis, Kay is able to be the type of artist she wants to be.

Kay's other notable role is that of Ragnar's wife. What would lead her to marry a pirate who is gone all the time? Perhaps it was some biological imperative to produce absurdly good-looking, Nordic uber-children. Actually, though, Ragnar and Kay have something in common: both are more creative, life-of-the-mind types than the other industrialists. Ragnar did want to be a philosopher, after all. Their final scene together demonstrates this:

Kay Ludlow sat before a mirror, thoughtfully studying the shades of film make-up spread open in a battered case. Ragnar Danneskjöld

lay stretched on a couch, reading a volume of the works of Aristotle. (3.10.3.4)

Kay's other role is as the only other woman in Akston's little circle, comprised of his three sons and their spouses essentially. This allows her to serve as a female companion to Dagny. In terms of her morals and brains, Dagny is miles beyond the book's other real-world women. Kay makes a nice counterpart to Dagny, representing the humanities and arts side of Galt's values, while Dagny takes care of the business side. Both of them are ideal women who live by values similar to Galt, so it makes a lot of sense that Kay would be married to the third member of Galt's inner circle.

Character Analysis: Dick McNamara

Aka (also known as):

Dick McNamara, McNamara

Character Analysis

McNamara has the distinction of being the first person to "disappear," leaving Dagny in a serious lurch business-wise. He was a contractor who was going to help Dagny with her railroad in Colorado. He plays an important role in terms of the book's ongoing mysteries; he disappears right after Eddie mentions his importance to his mystery friend, whom we later find out is John Galt. This coincidence raises a definite red flag and alerts us to the possibility that there is more to Eddie's friend than meets the eye. McNamara effectively helps heighten the tension in the ensuing scenes between Eddie and his friend.

In Atlantis, McNamara is one the people who is somewhat blunt with Dagny:

"You know, Miss Taggart, when it comes to the John Galt Lines - maybe it's I who've followed it and you who're betraying it." (3.1.1.321)

This pointed comment forces Dagny to reconsider her decisions and raises a lot of questions about the strike in general.

Character Analysis: Cuffy Meigs

Aka (also known as):

Cuffy Meigs, Cuffy

Character Analysis

And confronting her daily there was the final product of it all, the heir and collector - Cuffy Meigs, the man impervious to thought. Cuffy Meigs strode through the offices of Taggart Transcontinental, wearing a semi-military tunic and slapping a shiny leather briefcase against his shiny leather leggings. He carried an automatic pistol in one pocket and a rabbit's foot in the other. (3.5.3.15)

That's the best character sum-up in the whole book. Cuffy truly is the logical, inevitable end result of the type of government that's in power. As the looters began to pass increasingly restrictive laws and using increasing force, for a Cuffy Meigs to gain a position of power was the next logical step.

He is basically a thug, a would-be gangster. And in a government that operates on corruption, backstabbing, and illegal activity, it stands to reason that a criminal would move up the ranks swiftly. Cuffy is no ideologue, and he seems to find James ridiculous. He's always yelling at him and calling him "Jimmy." Cuffy is disrespectful and ready to knock heads together, and the other looters seem scared of him:

He spoke little, but when he did it was to snap decisively, with a contemptuous grin, "Pipe down, Jimmy!" or "Nuts, Wes, you're talking through your hat!" (3.5.4.17)

Seeming to tire of the ideological crowd, he stages his own coup of Project X, the pinnacle of the government's ideas on force and control. Cuffy of course doesn't know how to operate the machine, and in a fit of stubbornness he blows up the entire

facility, killing himself and everyone else in a hundred-mile radius. This is a rather fitting legacy for a person who seemed to appreciate, and even long for, violence.

Character Analysis: Dave Mitchum

Aka (also known as):

Dave Mitchum, Mitchum

Character Analysis

Mitchum is both the tragic hero and chief villain of the Tunnel Disaster. A man who got his job through personal connections and shady dealing, Dave Mitchum has never made an important decision in his life:

Dave Mitchum had spent his life slipping around the necessity of ever making a decision; he had done it by waiting to be told and never being certain of anything. All that he now allowed into his brain was a long, indignant whine against injustice. (2.7.3.191)

What's scary about the looters' regime is that so many people in positions of power are just like Mitchum: none of them are willing to make decisions or take responsibility for things. And in a society where no one is willing to decide anything, incidents like the Tunnel Disaster happen while people essentially stand around shrugging.

Mitchum not only represents the type of unqualified people getting management positions in this society; he also gives us a compelling portrait of how anxiety and fear can lead people to make huge mistakes. Terrified of reprisals from Washington, Mitchum allows the train to proceed through the tunnel with a dangerous engine, the final result of a sort of domino effect of fear.

Dave Mitchum is trying to save his own skin above all else in a society that is always on the hunt for scapegoats. He doesn't want to make any decisions at all, and this attitude (shared by the majority in power) puts him in a no-win situation where he

has to do something he doesn't want to.

What's ironic, and sad, is that Mitchum doesn't even realize he has a choice in the matter: he could refuse to run the train. In the end he is too scared of Washington and too incapable of thinking independently to make a good decision, so he runs away and tries to pawn the blame off on someone else.

Character Analysis: Chick Morrison

Aka (also known as):

Chick Morrison, Morrison

Character Analysis

Chick Morrison arrives on the scene with a couple other minor looters who bear mentioning - Tinky Holloway, Buzzy Watts, and Bud Hazleton. The era of the lame nicknames had begun, and this really gives us some insight into the type of people who were gaining positions of power. As with 1930s gangsters, the ridiculous, "friendly"-sounding nicknames contrast to the people they're attached to. They are here to play hardball and they all promptly get involved in factions, in-fighting, and cutthroat politics.

It makes sense that Cuffy Meigs arrives in the next "wave" of looters, too. As the government drifted closer to using outright force and violence, the people running it grew more like criminals and thugs, culminating in militia-man Cuffy Meigs. Chick Morrison also fits in rather well with Cuffy's style of doing things - he resorts to using guns instead of just words. Morrison shows that he paid attention at gangster school in the scene with Galt, where he has one of his goons hold Galt at gunpoint and force him to attend a staged television banquet with them.

Aside from being potentially violent and dangerous, Chick Morrison's name is practically synonymous with corruption in the book. He has a train known as the "Chick Morrison Special" from which he is getting kick-backs by hauling supplies to "friends." It's all about trading favors here. This is a man who has power and isn't afraid to use and abuse it. And when he doesn't get his way, he resorts to threats and violence.

Character Analysis: Wesley Mouch

Aka (also known as):

Wesley Mouch, Mouch

Character Analysis

Wesley Mouch probably has the most appropriate name in the book, since he's basically a moocher. He rides other people's coattails into positions of power and influence, then proceeds to do a terrible job.

Mouch is sort of the captain of the looters, maybe even more so than the always-panicking James Taggart. This book features a revolving door of villainous characters who aren't very well sketched out. Which may be the point - the country is in upheaval and it makes sense that the corrupt regime of the looters would feature lots of backstabbing and power shifts. We need to get a sense of the huge number of people involved in the corrupt system and the speed with which they can fall out of favor.

But Mouch has staying power. He shows up at the very beginning and is here to stay. He's one of the three who tortures Galt at the end of the novel, along with fellow long-staying looters James and Ferris. He's also one of the only looters to get an actual backstory.

Mouch led an undistinguished life. He was a bad student and was bad with money. He started off his career working for an advertising agency that sold bogus cure-all medicines. Sounds like a real winner.

From then on, people helped Wesley Mouch to advance, for the same reason as that which had prompted Uncle Julius: they were people who believed that mediocrity was safe.... By the situation of the

moment, they had concluded that Wesley Mouch was a man of superlative skill and cunning, since millions aspired to power, but he was the one who had achieved it. (2.6.1.54)

In this respect, he is representative of everyone who becomes a major player in the government, and it's no mistake that he runs the powerful Economic Planning Bureau. The mediocre Mouch gets into positions of great responsibility, where mediocrity itself becomes a very dangerous trait to possess.

Character Analysis: Mr. Mowen

Aka (also known as):

Mr. Mowen, Mowen

Character Analysis

The owner of a switch and signal company, Mr. Mowen is another of the book's minor, bad businessmen. He isn't a bigwig in the looter regime, but he definitely plays a part. Mr. Mowen crops up a few times in the book, but one scene in particular really embodies the type of character he is, and his role in the novel:

"Something ought to be done," said Mr. Mowen. "A friend of mine went out of business - last week - the oil business...couldn't compete with Ellis Wyatt. It isn't fair. They ought to leave the little people a chance. He shouldn't be allowed to produce so much...there's a shortage of oil in the city.... Things aren't right. Something ought to be done about it." (1.9.4.36)

This contradictory, illogical, and petulant rant embodies everything the looters represent as a group and as a system of ideas. Mowen often expresses a desire for things to stay the same, as well, protesting against businessmen "disappearing." Stability is an important running theme in looter ideology. James in particular is a proponent of stability at any cost. Mowen also seems to want things to magically go his way without having to worry about reason or practical details.

Mowen's resentment of people who are doing better than he is, or who are shaking up his small (and small-minded) world, is a sign of his looter status. Unlike Galt's crowd, looters resent talent. Unlike some of the more cynical and savvy looters, though, Mr. Mowen seems somewhat bewildered by things, almost as if he fell into the looter system without knowing any

better.

Character Analysis: Midas Mulligan

Aka (also known as):

Michael Mulligan, Midas, Midas Mulligan, Mulligan

Character Analysis

Midas Mulligan is another one of our legendary, larger-than-life, heroic figures in the book, comparable to characters like Richard Halley and Galt himself. Like Galt, Midas is linked to a Greek myth, one appropriately dealing with wealth and greed. (See the chapter summary for Volume 1, Chapter 10.)

In his long career, he had ignored all the public attacks on him, except one. His first name had been Michael; when a newspaper columnist of the humanitarian clique nicknamed him Midas Mulligan and the tag stuck to him as an insult, Mulligan appeared in court and petitioned for a legal change of his first name to "Midas." The petition was granted. (1.10.6.26)

Now that's hardcore. Mulligan has a lot of similarities to another outrageous figure in the book: the bold, legendary Nat Taggart. In this way, he ties in to themes of the past, like Richard Halley and Hugh Akston do. He seems to belong to an earlier age of industrial giants, and his disappearance also appropriately has a touch of the epic to it:

There was - Dagny had thought uneasily for years - a quality of the impossible to Mulligan's disappearance; it was as if New York skyscraper had vanished one night. (1.10.6.30)

Like a skyscraper, Mulligan continues to be a "towering" sort of figure in Atlantis. (He owns the valley, for one thing.) He can be downright gruff and seems to have left his internal censor back in the real world. It's questionable as to whether he says these blunt things without thinking or deliberately.

In the scene right before Dagny makes her decision to leave Atlantis, Mulligan goes on a rant about how bad things are about to get in the real world. Makes us question whether he's trying to dissuade Dagny from going back, in his own gruff way, or whether he doesn't realize the effect this speech might have on Dagny.

We get the sense that Mulligan was always like this, though, which is interesting, given how Atlantis transforms a lot of the strikers, like Ellis Wyatt. The Mulligan of Atlantis seems to be just as bold, blunt, and brash as the Mulligan of Chicago.

Character Analysis: Judge Narragansett

Aka (also known as):

Judge Narragansett, the Judge

Character Analysis

The Judge is directly linked to the Midas Mulligan mystery and mythology, and like many of the older members of the Atlantis community, he is a sort of living legend, more closely tied to the past than the corrupt present. Both Mulligan and the Judge quit over the same case: a lawsuit in which a loser demanded a loan from Mulligan. The Judge ruled against the loser, a Lee Hunsacker, who was tied to the infamous Twentieth Century Motor Factory, but his ruling was overturned by another, corrupt, judge. Narragansett joined Galt's strike shortly after this case, feeling he could no longer practice law in the real world.

The Judge is sort of the chief political figure in Atlantis, and it's fitting that his final scene shows him rewriting the constitution (pretty bold!). His addendum naturally has to do with rights for businesspeople:

He was now adding a new clause to its pages: "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of production and trade . . ." (3.10.3.5)

We're guessing the Judge must have added another clause to the Constitution saying that he has the power to rewrite it, since the Founding Fathers didn't exactly say that any dude with some White-Out could go to town on it. Like most of the Atlantis crowd, the Judge does want he wants!

Character Analysis: Ben Nealy

Aka (also known as):

Ben Nealy, Ben

Character Analysis

Ben is the contractor Dagny hires to work on the John Galt Line after the guy she wanted, McNamara, disappears. Nealy is competent but definitely lacks imagination. He doubts everything and isn't very willing to take risks. He's downright reluctant to listen to Dagny and what he sees as her wacky ideas.

"There's no use getting upset, Miss Taggart. I'm doing my best."

"I've hired you to do a job, not to do your best - whatever that is."

"That's a funny thing to say. That's an unpopular attitude, Miss Taggart, mighty unpopular." (1.7.1.12-14)

Ben demonstrates how a lot of people in the country collaborate with and reinforce the looters' system in small ways. Ben isn't bad at his job, but he has taken in enough of the looters' rhetoric, their love of stability and fear of change, for it to start bleeding into his work and his interactions. Ben shows us what an uphill battle Galt is fighting against a firmly entrenched way of thinking and living.

Character Analysis: The Newsstand Owner

Aka (also known as):

The Newsstand Owner, Newsstand Man

Character Analysis

Though Dagny is friendly with the Newsstand Owner, we never learn his name. She considers him a part of the Taggart Terminal and stops by periodically to speak with him. He's a seemingly lonely old man whose main hobby is collecting cigarettes. This hobby is also highly convenient in terms of the ongoing mysteries in the book. Dagny gives the Newsstand Owner the mysterious cigarette she gets from Hugh Akston, which bears a dollar sign on it. The Newsstand Owner investigates and comes up empty, which helps let us know that there is some sort of underground movement going on.

Character Analysis: Ted Nielsen

Aka (also known as):

Ted Nielsen, Nielsen

Character Analysis

Another member of the Colorado crowd, Ted Nielsen is distinctive for being the last holdout to join the strike. It isn't clear whether this had to do with Nielsen himself or with Galt's recruitment schedule (he tended to target more essential industries, and Nielsen's motors may not have come up first). He does have a very important conversation with Dagny, though, where the idea of the destroyer is introduced for the first time:

"Dagny, I've always thought that I'd rather die than stop working. But so did the men who're gone.... Those men were my friends....They would not have gone like that, without a word, leaving to us the added terror of the inexplicable - unless they had some reason of supreme importance..... Dagny, I can't tell what I'll do when I see it - whatever it was that they saw when they went."

It seemed to her that some destroyer was moving soundlessly through the country and the lights were dying at his touch. (2.2.1.5-6)

Nielsen also highlights an important fact here: the industrialists are all not just business partners, but also friends, so the strike is in many ways breaking apart and reforming a family.

Character Analysis: Betty Pope

Aka (also known as):

Betty Pope, Betty

Character Analysis

Betty is the woman who is having an affair with James Taggart at the beginning of the novel. In her one main scene with James, she is rude and trashy. Her tawdry relationship with James contrasts with the loving relationships we see between characters like John and Dagny.

Character Analysis: Dr. Simon Pritchett

Aka (also known as):

Dr. Simon Pritchett, Dr. Pritchett

Character Analysis

Dr. Pritchett becomes a big player at Patrick Henry University after Dr. Akston leaves, signaling the nose-dive that institution took in the post-Akston era. Dr. Pritchett is the polar opposite of Akston in terms of philosophy. While Akston is a champion of reason and man's heroic potential, Dr. Pritchett is a nihilist. Nihilism is a philosophy that believes in nothing. It says values don't exist, but rather are invented. Life is without meaning, purpose, or value. Here's an example of Dr. Pritchett's beliefs:

"You suffer from the popular delusion of believing that things can be understood. You do not grasp the fact that the universe is a solid contradiction."

"A contradiction of what?" asked the woman.

"Of itself."

"How...how's that?"

"My dear madam, the duty of thinkers is not to explain, but to demonstrate that nothing can be explained." (1.6.1.46-50)

Dr. Pritchett espouses this sort of philosophy everywhere he goes, from classrooms to parties. He is the symbol of everything that has gone wrong with the country's educational system. His cynical and depressing teachings demoralize young people and inculcate bad values and ideas. Characters like the Wet Nurse are products of the type of thinking that Pritchett teaches.

Character Analysis: Mrs. Rearden

Aka (also known as):

Mrs. Rearden

Character Analysis

If we were handing out Mother of the Year awards, Mrs. Rearden would not be a finalist. Not even close. She might even be disqualified. Mrs. Rearden has taken in the looters' moral system so completely that she even mistreats her older son, since he's basically forfeited his right to receive charity and kindness due to his own moral code.

Mrs. Rearden is also hopelessly confused by her son. She seems to live in a bubble of wealth, without any conception of how exactly Hank contributes to her lifestyle. In a rather funny scene, Mrs. Rearden demonstrates her obliviousness and her blind faith in Hank's Houdini-like ability to magically "fix" things:

"I don't understand it," said his mother. "Jail? Did you just say jail, Lillian? Henry, are you going to jail?"

"I might be."

"But that's ridiculous! Do something about it."

"What?"

"I don't know. I don't understand any of it. Respectable people don't go to jail. Do something. You've always known what to do about business." (2.4.1.30-3)

The philosophical conflict between Mrs. Rearden and her son defines their relationship much more completely than their

blood relationship. In fact, we often get the sense that Mrs. Rearden is only Philip's mother and scarcely has anything to do with Hank at all. We get no flashbacks of Hank's childhood, where we presume his mother played some role, and we get the sense that there is very little affection between them.

"That's *your cruelty, that's what's mean and selfish about you. If you loved your brother, you'd give him a job he didn't deserve, precisely because he didn't deserve it* - that *would be true love and kindness and brotherhood."* (1.7.9.58)

Mrs. Rearden resents her older son on behalf of her younger son, who clearly is on the same page as her in terms of values and ideas.

Character Analysis: Philip Rearden

Aka (also known as):

Philip Rearden, Philip

Character Analysis

Hank's younger brother shows us exactly what's wrong with the idea of being your "brother's keeper." Philip mooches off Hank then bites the hand that feeds him. He wants free handouts and shows no thanks or even basic kindness and respect in return:

"By the way, Henry," Philip added, "do you mind if I ask you to have Miss Ives give me the money in cash?" Rearden turned back to him, puzzled. "You see, Friends of Global Progress are a very progressive group and they have always maintained that you represent the blackest element of social retrogression in the country, so it would embarrass us, you know, to have your name on our list of contributors, because somebody might accuse us of being in the pay of Hank Rearden." (1.2.1.306)

This guy is shameless. Philip has completely bought in to the intellectual and moral system of the looters and his life is ultimately pathetic. He remains on the fringes of the looter power system and seems to spend his time asking Hank for handouts, insulting Hank, and reciting ridiculous ideology at parties.

Character Analysis: Dwight Sanders

Aka (also known as):

Dwight Sanders, Sanders

Character Analysis

Sanders, like Dagny and Lawrence Hammond, is in the transportation business: airplanes in his case. Sanders' planes, like Hammond's cars, feature more prominently in the story than the man himself. However, he has an interesting scene with Dagny after she first arrives in Atlantis. Here Sanders explains to her the nature of his business and how life works in the valley:

"Why, no. At Sanders' Aircraft."

"Where is it?"

"Where did you think it was? In that building in New Jersey . . .?"

"Where is it, then?"

"Wherever I am." (3.1.1.277-81)

Sanders is emphasizing the power of the mind: that's where his factory is; its physical location doesn't really matter. For Dagny, who is deeply attached to the Taggart Terminal building itself, this is a hard concept to accept.

Character Analysis: Joe Scott

Aka (also known as):

Joe Scott, Joe

Character Analysis

Joe is the drunk engineer who agrees to drive the train into the Tunnel after the other engineer quits in protest over what they are about to do. We hear about Joe's panic during the disaster and his death from sole survivor Luke Beal.

Character Analysis: Bertram Scudder

Aka (also known as):

Bertram Scudder, Bertram

Character Analysis

We have to hand it to Bertram: for someone who isn't a politician or a businessman, he manages to stay in the thick of things for a really long time. Bertram is a journalist who writes angry, ranting essays. His most notable one is a rant targeted at Hank Rearden that wins him a lot of respect in looter circles. It's why Lillian invites him to Hank's party, which Hank doesn't realize for a while. Bertram seems to be everywhere, and is close to James Taggart until his downfall:

Bertram Scudder was staring at [Dagny]; this was not the speech he had expected and he felt, in dim panic, that it was not proper to let her continue, but she was a special guest whom the Washington rulers had ordered him to treat cautiously; he could not be certain whether he was now supposed to interrupt her or not. (3.3.3.17)

Bertram demonstrates the flaws in the looters' philosophy here; he doesn't know how to make decisions, and he's too scared of Washington to do anything that might upset them. He ultimately becomes the scapegoat for Dagny's bold radio speech. Ironically, Bertram was supposed to debate Dagny on the merits of Rearden Metal way back in Volume 1, but Dagny refused to go on the air with him. Ironically, Bertram may have survived as long as he did because of that refusal.

Character Analysis: Claude Slagenhop

Aka (also known as):

Claude Slagenhop, Claude

Character Analysis

Good old Claude is the president of the Friends of Global Progress, a rather questionable charitable foundation. It's a ridiculous organization that practices the looter ideology and the illogic that it preaches. Claude is close with Philip Rearden, and near the end of the novel he is one of the people who works with Tinky Holloway to coerce Hank into accepting the crappy Steel Unification Plan. Claude treats Philip with a lot of contempt, referring to him as a "punk."

Character Analysis: The Starnes Family

Aka (also known as):

The Starnes Family, Jed Starnes, Ivy Starnes, Gerald Starnes, Eric Starnes

Character Analysis

It's fitting that the dilapidated Starnesville was named for the Starnes family. The town essentially tells the story of the decline and fall of this family, and their factory.

We start off with Jed Starnes, the owner of the Twentieth Century Motor Factory, which in its heyday was the best in the country. We don't hear much about Jed Starnes, but knowing that John Galt went to work at the Factory after graduating college tells us something about the kind of man he must have been. We also hear from various sources that his factory was very successful and the town that bore his name, Starnesville, was a pleasant, prosperous place.

But then Jed Starnes died and his three children took over the factory. These children were all horrible people who ran the factory into the ground and inspired Galt to begin his crusade. The kids preached the slogan "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Basically they did away with salaries and had people "vote" on what others should earn based on their "needs." This turned into a disaster.

Ivy Starnes was considered the worst of these kids. Jeff Allen, a man who worked in the factory, has this to say about her:

"She had pale eyes that looked fishy, cold, and dead. And if you ever want to see pure evil, you should have seen the way her eyes glinted when she watched some man who'd talked back to her once and who'd just heard his name on the list of those getting nothing above

basic pittance." (2.10.1.110)

Dagny herself actually met Ivy and tried to get answers out of her, back when she was searching for the elusive inventor of the motor. Ivy sadistically preys on people's emotions and enjoys tormenting them. In this respect, she is what Galt calls a "looter of the spirit" and has a lot in common with James Taggart, who also enjoys destroying people for his own amusement. What's truly terrible about Ivy is that she acts sadistically but speaks in terms of charity and brotherly love. She embodies the very worst of what Galt considers looter ideology.

Her brother, Gerald Starnes, represents what Galt calls the "materialists." Gerald is a greedy looter. He takes advantage of the terrible policies at the factory to line his own pocketbook. Jeff Allen describes Gerald like this:

"But when a bastard like Gerald Starnes puts on an act and keeps spouting that he doesn't care for material wealth...that all the lushness is not for himself, but for our sake and for the common good, because it's necessary to keep up the prestige of the company and of the noble plan in the eyes of the public - then that's when you learn to hate the creature as you've never hated anything human." (2.10.1.109)

Gerald uses humanitarianism to enrich himself. He also loves the media, and takes credit for how "great" things are at the factory, kind of like the way Orren Boyle spends more time making videos about how great his business is than actually running it. Combined, Gerald and Ivy represent two strands of the looters' parasitic actions and ideology. They each use and abuse people for their own ends, namely power.

The last of the Starnes siblings is Eric, the youngest. Eric is dead by the time the novel starts, and we hear about his death during Dagny's hunt for the inventor of the motor. Eric committed suicide in the house of a young woman he was pursuing on her wedding day. Talk about vindictive. Eric ran around acting like he was a friend to everyone, but what that really meant was that he wanted everyone to be his friend. This actually recalls

James's plea to Cherryl that he wanted to be "loved." Eric was both a greedy and a manipulative looter, serving as a sort of hybrid of his two older siblings.

Character Analysis: Andrew Stockton

Aka (also known as):

Andrew Stockton, Stockton

Character Analysis

Stockton is yet another Colorado industrialist who stands out for the extended scene we get with him in Atlantis. Let's check it out:

The smiling face that approached her out of the fog was Andrew Stockton's and she saw a grimy hand extended to her with a gesture of confident pride, as if it held all her moment's vision on its palm. . . .

"Then somebody could put you out of business, too?"

"Sure. Any time. I know one man who could and probably will, when he gets here. But, boy! - I'd work for him as a cinder sweeper. He'd blast through this valley like a rocket. He'd triple everybody's production." (3.1.1.382-90).

Stockton gives Dagny a good rundown of the way people in Atlantis view business. It's a healthy competition among talented people. There's never any shame in losing out to a more talented competitor, since it enables you to keep doing good work more efficiently, and thus to have even more time for yourself. Stockton's healthy view of competition greatly contrasts to the vicious and corrupt world that Dagny left behind.

Stockton also helps confirm what an important figure Hank Rearden is to his fellow industrialists and the strike as a whole. Hank is of course the man he's talking about.

Character Analysis: Mr. and Mrs. Taggart

Aka (also known as):

Mr. Taggart, Mrs. Taggart

Character Analysis

Both are dead before the book begins, and we get the sense that neither of them made all that much of an impact on the lives of their children. Mr. Taggart seems aware that his son is a fool and that his daughter has a hard road ahead of her, but he doesn't do anything to help resolve the situation before he dies. Mrs. Taggart, more than anything else, seems hopelessly confused by her daughter. The Taggart parents are only mentioned twice in the whole book, in Chapters 1.3 and 1.5. Dagny's ancestor, Nat Taggart, is a more important influence on her life than her parents.

Character Analysis: Nathaniel "Nat" Taggart

Aka (also known as):

Nat Taggart, Nathaniel Taggart

Character Analysis

Dagny worships at the Church of Nat Taggart, and it's a religion with a bizarre messiah:

Many stories were whispered about him. It was said that in the wilderness of the Middle West, he murdered a state legislator who attempted to revoke a charter granted to him... but the charge could never be proved. (1.3.2.17)

This guy doesn't seem like a great role model. But Dagny sees him as more than some sort of legendary Old West figure; he represents hard work and achievement:

All that Dagny wanted of life was contained in the desire to hold her head as he did. (1.3.2.21)

Dagny wants to live the sort of bold and uncompromising life that Nat lived, and she finds inspiration in his struggles and his never-say-die attitude. She even communes with him during a meeting where the Board shuts down the John Galt Line she'd worked so hard to build:

"You had to bear it, too, generations ago - and it was just as hard for you, just as bad, but you did not let it stop you." (2.5.1.143)

Nat is a guiding presence in the book and ties in to the running themes of history, inspiring legends, and the importance of having people to look up to in life.

Character Analysis: Mr. Thompson

Aka (also known as):

Mr. Thompson

Character Analysis

Mr. Thompson is like Wesley Mouch times five. Like Wesley, Thompson is nondescript and boring. In fact, he never even merits a first name. This is an important key to his character - we never fully understand the man, and there may not be much there to even understand. In a way, he's the consummate product of the looters' ideology: mediocre to the extreme, he doesn't stand out or make decisive decisions.

Mr. Thompson, the Head of the State, was a man who possessed the quality of never being noticed. In any group of three, his person became indistinguishable, and when seen alone it seemed to evoke a group of its own, composed of the countless persons he resembled. The country had no clear image of what he looked like.... (2.6.1.6)

Having Thompson as the Head of the State says a lot about the state the country is in. We get more scenes with him after Galt's radio address and see that he can scarcely fathom what a person like Galt can want.

"Now, wait! Wait! Don't go to extremes. There's always a middle ground. You can't have everything. We aren't...people aren't ready for it. . . .What's the . . .? Don't sit there grinning like that!...I don't think you understand me. I'm offering you Wesley Mouch's job - and there's nothing bigger that anyone could offer you!" (3.8.5.51-5)

Mr. Thompson is both indistinguishable and unimaginative. He's the product of the looters' system: afraid of change, indecisive, and greedy. And he's clearly unable to think outside of that system when he encounters Galt.

Character Analysis: The Trainmaster

Aka (also known as):

The Trainmaster

Character Analysis

This unnamed man is one of the many people complicit in the Tunnel Disaster. We get a very interesting backstory for him that helps explain his role in all of this. The trainmaster's younger brother, an intelligent young researcher, committed suicide after the awful Directive passed. The trainmaster is now horribly disillusioned. A true victim of the looters' regime, he becomes an agent of that regime in his grief and helps contribute to a disaster that claims a lot of lives.

Character Analysis: Lester Tuck

Aka (also known as):

Lester Tuck, Lester

Character Analysis

Even though he is Kip Chalmer's campaign manager, Lester doesn't have much influence over Kip. He is sort of a pathetic, beaten-down older guy who couldn't get a job doing anything else. He just sort of shrugs when Kip starts ranting and does little to help defuse the situation at all.

Character Analysis: The Twentieth Century Motor Factory

Aka (also known as):

The Twentieth Century Motor Factory

Character Analysis

The Twentieth Century Motor Factory is one of the book's ongoing mysteries and a sort of microcosm of the country as a whole. The downfall of the Factory, like that of the country, was caused by bad values and ideas, featured a whole series of heroes and villains, and ended in disaster. It's no mistake that the incidents at the Factory served as the catalyst for Galt's strike. The factory itself housed great promise (Galt's motor) and great evil (in the form of its terrible policies), which are represented in the various people connected with it.

Character Analysis: Mr. Ward

Aka (also known as):

Mr. Ward

Character Analysis

Mr. Ward only appears in one scene in the book, but it is an important one. Mr. Ward is one of the book's many snapshot characters, meaning characters that we get a quick picture of in a small scene. Often characters like this represent a certain idea or stand in for a larger group of people. In Mr. Ward's one and only scene he asks Hank for any Rearden Metal he can spare. Ward is one of the early victims of the country's economic and industrial decline, as well as looter incompetence. Thanks to Orren Boyle, Ward doesn't get the steel he needs to run his business, so he comes to Hank quite desperate for help:

"You know, Mr. Rearden, I don't like people who talk too much about how everything they do is just for the sake of others. It's not true, and I don't think it would be right if it were true. So I'll say that what I need the steel for is to save my own business. Because it's mine. Because if I had to close it...." (1.7.9.76)

Mr. Ward helps put the looters' regime in perspective. We sympathize with Hank's struggle, but the crisis really hits home when we read about someone like Mr. Ward, who is about to go out of business because he can't get materials. He has to resort to begging for handouts, while trying to maintain some shred of dignity. Mr. Ward is present when Hank learns about the Equalization of Opportunity Bill, which is a crushing blow to Hank. Mr. Ward's reaction demonstrates the kind of decent small businessman he is. It's also interesting that we don't just get Hank's immediate reaction to the Bill; we also get a reaction from someone who will be indirectly impacted by it, showing us the ripple effect of disastrous looter policies.

Character Analysis: Mr. Clem Weatherby

Aka (also known as):

Mr. Clem Weatherby, Mr. Weatherby, Weatherby

Character Analysis

Mr. Weatherby appears on the scene during the closure of the John Galt Line. He's the "man from Washington" sent to keep an eye on things at Taggart Transcontinental. Mr. Weatherby is in many respects a typical Washington looter. He's a fan of backdoor, shady dealing. He never comes out and says exactly what he means. He tows the party line and spouts off lots of rhetoric, and he enjoys manipulating people. So, your basic looter, really. Here's a scene where he threatens James with kindness. Seriously, it's a skill.

"It's the interests of the country as a whole that he's got to consider above everything else." Taggart sat up; of all the danger signs he knew, this line of talk was the worst. "Nobody can deny it, Jim, that Wesley feels a high regard for you as an enlightened businessman...and one of his closest friends." Taggart's eyes shot to him swiftly; this was still worse. (2.5.1.56)

Interestingly, Dagny actually seeks Weatherby out when she returns from her Woodstock vacation in the wake of the Taggart Tunnel disaster. She refuses to work with Wesley Mouch, recalling how he betrayed Hank, and tells Weatherby to keep everyone else in Washington off her back. Weatherby seems excited by the prospect of controlling Dagny, but that of course doesn't pan out for him.

In fact, the proper Mr. Weatherby seems to be the least influential of the looters by the end of the novel. He's been supplanted by thugs like Cuffy Meigs. Weatherby's rise and fall says a lot about how the looters' system of government changed

over time.

Character Analysis: The Wet Nurse

Aka (also known as):

Non-absolute, Tony, The Wet Nurse

Character Analysis

It's fitting that we only learn the Wet Nurse's name at the moment of his death. In a lot of ways, he is the male Cherryl Brooks. As Hank Rearden's Washington advisor, the Wet Nurse is the victim of a terrible educational system and another tragic representative of the costs of that system and the strike:

He uttered nothing but uncertain opinions about physical nature - and nothing but categorical imperatives about men. (2.1.3.17)

Hank pities the Wet Nurse and is often angry on his behalf for the bad education he received. The Wet Nurse, like Cherryl, is basically doomed from the start; he was never given a chance to survive in the looters' world, and he dies in the effort to break free.

His other nickname from Hank is "Non-absolute," a reference to his type of education and value system. We see the Wet Nurse gradually start to question and then act against Washington. In the end he is killed in an effort to aid Hank, and at the moment of his tragic death we finally learn his name: Tony. Hank uses his first name almost as a blessing and a salute to the type of person the Wet Nurse gradually became. In a sense, he earned his name at the moment of his death by finally becoming an actual human being with good life values.

Character Analysis: Mark Yonts

Aka (also known as):

Mark Yonts, Mark

Character Analysis

Owner of the People's Mortgage Company, this is the man who sold the Factory to Mayor Bascom. The Mayor recalls Mark fondly and has no idea where he has gone. Mark Yonts sold the Factory to two different parties and then skipped town. So now the Factory sits idle while it's embroiled in endless legal disputes.

Character Analysis: The Young Brakeman

Aka (also known as):

The Young Brakeman

Character Analysis

We never learn this young man's name, even though he appears at some crucial moments in the story, but the brakeman is closely connected with the book's theme of mystery. When we first meet him, the brakeman is whistling Halley's *Fifth Concerto*, and inadvertently introduces the theme to Dagny.

"Tell me please what are you whistling?"

The boy turned to her. She met a direct glance and saw an open, eager smile, as if he were sharing a confidence with a friend. . . .

"It's the Halley Concerto," he answered, smiling.

"Which one?"

"The Fifth."

She let a moment pass, before she answered slowly and very carefully, "Richard Halley only wrote four concertos."

The boy's smile vanished. (1.1.2.10-16)

The musical theme is very important in the novel. Dagny hears it in her mind at various points, and it becomes something of a hopeful mantra to her. It's also notable that the boy seems to recognize her as a friend here.

We don't learn until much later the young brakeman's full connection with music: he's actually a pupil of Richard Halley's.

So what is he doing working as a brakeman? Well, in Galt's Atlantis, everyone works in whatever jobs are needed and pursue their passions on the side, in the free time they create for themselves. Some strikers also take menial jobs in the real world, in order to avoid serving the looters.

So a musician moonlighting as a brakeman isn't a contradiction in Galt's value system. He's doing necessary work in order to have the freedom to pursue his true passion. The young brakeman also helps demonstrate the connection between the arts and business/science that exists in Galt's system. Since all work is work of the mind, this makes a lot of sense.

Character Analysis: The Young Mother

Aka (also known as):

The Young Mother

Character Analysis

This is actually the only good mother we meet in the entire book, standing in dramatic contrast to the book's other prominent mother, Mrs. Rearden. Actually, Mrs. Taggart probably wasn't a bad mother, but we are talking here about mothers living under the looters' system, so she doesn't really count. At any rate, the Young Mother accompanied her husband to Atlantis in order to raise their children in a positive environment. The mother describes her work as a job like any other in Atlantis: productive work demanding both values and the use of the mind.

Character Roles

Protagonist

Dagny Taggart and Hank Rearden

We really have co-protagonists in this book, though Dagny is arguably the chief protagonist. We follow their stories from the very beginning. They are the two last holdouts in Galt's strike, so we follow their journey as they gradually decide to join the strike. We root for these two characters, we get the bulk of the book from their perspectives, and for a long time they are the only two "heroes" in the entire novel.

Antagonist

James Taggart

In a novel filled to the brim with antagonists, James stands out. He is the only antagonist who is a major character, and as such he sort represents the others, whom Galt calls the "looters." James is often the mouthpiece of the looters' destructive ideology and he personally causes a lot of problems for our main protagonists, Hank and Dagny. If we were handing out a runner-up antagonist award, it would go to Lillian Rearden, who often conspires with James to cause both Hank and Dagny grief.

Guide/Mentor

John Galt

As the man behind the book's main philosophy, Galt is definitely a guide-figure to the bulk of the novel's "good" characters. Galt single-handedly starts the strike that changes the world, and he is the figure around whom the strikers gravitate. Galt's ideas inspire people to join him and adopt his morals as their own. Although he could be classed in the role of "romantic interest,"

we feel that his role as a guide outweighs that of a romantic interest for Dagny. In fact, the two roles are related, since, in this novel, love and romance are expressions of values.

Foil

Francisco d'Anconia to Hank and Dagny

For the first two volumes, Francisco acts as a foil to both Hank and Dagny. He used to share Dagny's values, but now he appears to waste his natural talents and to live as a playboy. However, we later learn that this playboy persona was just a front and that Francisco is actually part of Galt's strike. Francisco has deliberately turned himself into a foil in order to guide potential strikers to Galt and help teach them some tough moral lessons.

Muse

Dagny Taggart

Aside from being our protagonist, Dagny is doing double duty as a muse for many of the men in the novel, including John Galt, Hank, Francisco, and Eddie. All of these men view Dagny as an ideal and as an embodiment of their values. As a muse Dagny also inspires a lot of these men to take certain actions, such as Francisco's decision to join Galt's strike for Dagny's sake. It is also fitting that Dagny is sometimes likened to a work of art, most explicitly by Hank, who compares her to a painting, and John, who likens her to a statue.

Companion

Eddie Willers

Eddie is Robin to Dagny's Batman. He's the ultimate wingman, sidekick extraordinaire. Eddie has worshiped and followed Dagny since they were both kids. As adults he works with her and for her at the railroad, and he often tries to defend her

against opposing forces and to back her up in her battles. Eddie also serves as a confidant and friend for Dagny. Just get him a cape and some tights and he'll be ready to go.

Character Clues

Action

The characters in this book can be divided into two camps: those who do things and those who don't. The people involved in Galt's strike are definitely doers. They are linked to themes of movement, of choice and decisions, and to a variety of "active" professions, such as transportation industries. The strikers are particularly characterized by the decisions they make, which lead them to take decisive actions, such as building the John Galt Line in Dagny's case or joining the strike in Ellis Wyatt's case. The looters are shown to be indecisive and prone to panic. They tend to appear in scenes where they are gathered together in small rooms, sitting still and avoiding making decisions.

Occupation

Given how central work is to Galt's philosophy, it makes sense that occupation would be a major source of characterization in this book. All of the people affiliated with Galt are defined as hard workers who perform their jobs exceptionally well. Some of these characters are linked to highly symbolic professions: for instance, the sturdy and collected Henry Rearden produces steel. Other professions represented here are notable for being vital to the country and to the book's broader themes. For example, we meet lots of people involved in various transportation professions (Dagny with the railroad, Lawrence Hammond with his cars, Dwight Sanders with his airplanes). Transportation is of course vital to the country's survival and it is also tied in with the importance of motion in Galt's philosophy. By being involved in these professions, these characters become important emblems of Galt's strike and go on to play important roles in the strike and in Atlantis.

Physical Appearance

Galt's Atlantis could be a gigantic J. Crew ad, given how "really, really ridiculously good looking" (*Zoolander* shout out) everyone there is. This isn't just some sort of convenient trope, though, where good people are attractive and bad people are ugly. Galt's philosophy emphasizes the connections between people's minds and bodies; good morals are reflected in one's outer appearance. The looters, for their part, are frequently some combination of weak and mean looking, which reflects their inner selves. The thug-like Cuffy Meigs sports a crew-cut and resembles a bouncer. And the indecisive and whiny James is described as flabby and as having bad posture; he is spineless in a literal and a figurative sense.

Sex and Love

The types of romantic and/or sexual relationships that characters have in the novel are a vital clue to their characters. We included an "and/or" above because the good characters associate sex with love, while the bad characters have sex for rather unromantic, immoral reasons: petty revenge (Lillian and James), manipulation and control (James and Cherryl), just for the heck of it (James and Betty Pope). The way people speak about sex also does a lot to characterize them. Francisco sees sex as an expression of people's values and thinks it's a good thing. The rotten Mayor Bascom discusses Hank and Dagny's relationship like it's tawdry and shameful. What and who people love also provides a lot of insight into their characters, since love reflects people's values and inner selves here.

Speech and Dialogue

People really love speechifying in this book, so what they say plays a major role in establishing who they are as characters. But how people speak also provides us with a lot of great characterization. It's important that the people associated with Galt tend to speak in similar styles, while the looter crowd speaks in a very different way. Galt and friends (sounds like a bad sitcom) are articulate, truthful, and very blunt. They discuss facts and ideas clearly and pointedly. The looters, meanwhile, are vague and manipulative; they often say one thing but mean

something very different. When the two groups come together, the looters often come off as confused, while the strikers are often very terse and blunt. Here's a quick example:

The man leaned back, looked at Rearden incredulously and asked "What are you after?"

"I? What do you mean?"

"You're in business to make money, aren't you?"

"I am."

"You want to make a big a profit as possible, don't you?"

"I do."

"Then why do you want to struggle for years...rather than accept a fortune for Rearden Metal? Why?"

"Because it's mine. Do you understand the word?"

The man sighed and rose to his feet. (1.7.3.68-76)

Dialogue in this book doesn't characterize individual characters so much as it helps to demonstrate which groups the characters belong to, and what philosophies those groups support.

Thoughts and Opinions

This method of characterization is pretty obvious, given that this book is largely about philosophy. In fact, Galt's philosophy itself believes that a person is defined by his or her opinions and the actions that result from those opinions. As with speech and dialogue, thoughts and opinions are often used to indicate which philosophy a character supports rather than anything uniquely individual about them. However, a lot of characters' inner and expressed thoughts help to give us insight into their problems, their concerns, and their goals. For instance, Dagny often thinks about finding the one man she can love, which

plays a major role in focusing her values and defining who she is. Hank, meanwhile, is concerned with morals relating to sex and love, helping us to better understand the conflicts he has with his family and his own guilt.

Themes and Quote Analysis - Table of Contents

Philosophical Viewpoints: Objectivism

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Theme and Quote Analysis on: Philosophical Viewpoints: Objectivism

Theme Summary

Objectivism is the name of Ayn Rand's personal philosophy, and *Atlas Shrugged* is basically one gigantic Objectivist manifesto. The book is all about demonstrating how Objectivist ideas can be used in daily life, and why those ideas are so important. If a lot of the novel's 800 characters (OK, it's not that many, but it's definitely a large number) seem like they are just spouting off philosophy and Big Ideas a lot of the time, it's because they are. In fact, some characters in this novel are arguably little more than mouthpieces of certain philosophies. We're just going to cover Objectivism itself here and what it means in the book itself. If you want to read more about Ayn Rand and Objectivism, check out the "In a Nutshell" section.

Let's start with the basics. The word "Objectivism" is never mentioned in all of *Atlas Shrugged*, but its ideas are present from the start. Characters who are down with Objectivism (John Galt, Dagny, Hank, and Francisco especially) have something to say about everything. All the time. If we were creating a dating profile for it, we'd say that Objectivism likes: life (living is super), money (especially making money, which is seen as a moral act), individuality, the pursuit of happiness (for the individual), capitalism, hard work, high self-esteem, free will (choices are good), reason, rationality, long walks on the beach, and bubble baths (preferably with a romantic partner, since sex and love are seen as expressions of Objectivist values). In a nutshell, Objectivism says that people should live only for themselves and should use the powers of Reason to work hard and make a happy life for themselves.

We see all these ideas either supported or lived by our main characters, the good ones at least. Hank and Dagny, for instance, are successful, hard-working businesspeople who don't

put up with idiots, are often described as "selfish" (which in Objectivist terms means individual and cool), are super rational, and don't see sex as evil, which is another Objectivist principle. OK, Hank is late joining the party on that last one, but you get the idea.

One tricky thing about Objectivism in *Atlas Shrugged* is that it's never referred to outright by any character. Sure, lots of characters speechify about aspects of it, such as Francisco's spiel about money, Hank's various spiels about business, and Dagny's spiels about her railroad, hard-work, and love. But we don't get a definitive statement of Objectivism until Galt's radio address. And even calling that a definitive statement is a bit of a stretch.

Galt's speech is like information overload: it's rambling, it's long, and in a lot of places it's more a statement of personal views than a philosophical doctrine. Galt isn't so much coming down from Mt. Sinai to issue some new Ten Commandments as he is telling his life story in terms of his personal philosophy and explaining his strike. He's basically saying, "Here's what I think and what I'm doing. Feel free not to join in, but if you don't join you'll probably die a miserable death."

That's another tricky thing about Objectivism: it's highly concerned with morality and doing the right thing, so a lot of the philosophical themes of the book appear less in what people say or think and more in what they do.

The last tricky thing about Objectivism is that it has to be translated all the time. See, when people call Hank selfish they are using the looters' terms. In Objectivist terms, Hank's "selfishness" is a good thing. It's like permanent opposite day: if "looters" think it's bad, then Objectivism thinks it's good, and vice versa. So sex, money, selfishness, egoism, logic, reason, etc. are all good things to Objectivists. The things "looters" love, like charity and sacrifice, are bad to our Objectivists. It takes some mental gymnastics to keep up with Objectivist ideas, which often go against what is commonly seen as "moral" and good.

So here is a rundown of the basic tenets, or beliefs, of

Objectivism, as outlined by John Galt in his radio address. He outlines seven major ideas, which may be a sly reference to the Seven Deadly Sins, many of which Objectivism takes as virtues.

Our seven guiding principles are Rationality, Independence, Integrity, Honesty, Justice, Productiveness, and Pride. All of these principles are united against a common enemy: the practice of "blanking-out." "Blanking-out" for Galt refers to ignoring reality, people's true characters, your own happiness and desires, fairness, personal responsibility, etc. Galt wants people to face life and other people head-on in order to lead a moral life. Ignoring and pretending are immoral.

Doing things against the individual is also immoral for Galt. This is why he condemns both "Mystics" - or people who rely on superstition, religion, and the idea that people are inherently "sinful" - and "Materialists" - or people who prize society over the individual. Objectivism here opposes doctrines of Christianity, and especially the idea of Original Sin, which says that since Adam and Eve ate an apple and got tossed out of Eden, all people are born with sin. Little babies aren't blank, cute, slates; they've inherited a sin already from Adam and Eve. Objectivism dislikes this idea since it goes against the Objectivist notion that people are "heroic." Communism is also opposed here, since it's a system of government that favors society over the individual. This is why Galt praises American democracy and capitalism in his speech; these are systems that favor individuals.

What are some of the other things Objectivism opposes, as expressed by Galt? People who separate their minds from their bodies; the two should be united in harmony. Objectivism also opposes sacrifice and charity, or doing things for people based on their "need." According to Galt, people should trade for what they need, not take it. In the book we see consequences of sacrifice and need running totally amuck. Galt removed his fellow Objectivists, and their positive values, from the world so that the world would see how misguided it is.

Study Questions

1. Objectivism is a very action-oriented philosophy. How do certain characters' actions demonstrate their commitment to Objectivist morals?
2. In his radio address, Galt condemns violence and force. His strike is a means of more passive resistance, but it has a lot of violence consequences for bystanders. How does Galt explain and/or justify his strike, or does he even address the issue at all? If he doesn't address the problems of his strike, why is this important?
3. Why does John Galt dislike charity and sacrifice, things that are generally considered good?
4. Galt preaches that selfishness is a good thing. Do we see evidence of selfishness in the book, or do a lot of the main characters still "live for other people," which Objectivism considers wrong.
5. What does John Galt consider to be "reality"?
6. Hugh Akston and others insist that contradictions don't exist. Does Dagny actually resolve all of her contradictions by the end of the book?

Sample Thesis Statements

Though he doesn't come right out and say it, Galt and his Objectivism are opposed to Christianity.

Society has to be set up in a certain way in order for Objectivist values to succeed, which is why Galt and Francisco endorse capitalism as a political system.

Quotes & Thoughts on Philosophical Viewpoints:

Objectivism

QUOTE:

"Money is a tool of exchange, which can't exit unless there are goods produced and men able to produce them. Money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value." (2.2.4.220)

THOUGHT:

Francisco here expresses Objectivist ideas in his view of money as the only alternative to force. Money to him is how free people deal peacefully with one another as "traders."

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Here, we trade achievements, not failures - values, not needs. We're free of one another, yet we all grow together. Wealth, Dagny? What greater wealth is there, than to own your life and to spend it on growing? Every living thing must grow. It can't stand still. It must grow or perish." (3.1.1.66)

THOUGHT:

Ellis Wyatt here redefines wealth as more than just money - wealth is freedom. He also describes Atlantis in utopian terms.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"All work is an act of philosophy. And when men will learn to consider productive work - and that which is its source - as the standard of their moral values, they will reach that state of

perfection which is the birthright they lost....The source of work? Man's mind, Miss Taggart, man's reasoning mind." (3.1.2.40)

THOUGHT:

Hugh Akston raises an interesting point here: the idea that people can achieve a "state of perfection" with good values and work that expresses those values. In order to reach perfection, though, it needs to be defined in advance, which is what Galt's values do. How is work revealing and a potential proof of perfection?

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

[Robin Hood] is the man who became the symbol of the idea that need, not achievement, is the source of rights, that we don't have to produce, only to want, that the earned does not belong to us, but the unearned does. (2.7.2.99)

THOUGHT:

Pirates vs. Ninjas are out - here it's pirates vs. Robin Hood. Ragnar feels that the Robin Hood myth has been abused and now celebrates "need" over achievement. Achievement is a way of earning something, while need is a way of getting something for free.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I do not wish to work in a world that regards me as a slave. I do not wish to be of any value to people. If I succeeded in rebuilding the motor, I would not let you place it in their

service. I would not take it upon my conscience that anything produced by my mind should be used to bring them comfort." (2.9.1.151)

THOUGHT:

Quentin Daniels defines what the strike is all about here. He feels it would be immoral for him to cooperate with the "looters," so he's like a conscientious objector.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I do not seek the good of others as a sanction for my right to exist, nor do I recognize the good of others as a justification for their seizure of my property or their destruction of my life." (2.4.2.73)

THOUGHT:

At his trial, Hank refuses to recognize the court's right to judge him. He implies that selfishness is a virtue here by saying that he doesn't exist for "others."

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I want you to know this. I started my life with a single absolute: that the world was mine to shape in the image of my highest values and never to be given up to a lesser standard, no matter how long or hard the struggle.... I am going back to fight for this valley - to release it from its underground, to regain for it its full and rightful realm, to let the earth belong to you in fact, as it does in spirit - and to meet you again on the day when I'm able to deliver to you the whole of the world." (3.2.6.67)

THOUGHT:

Dagny hits upon the main moral conflict of the book here: is the best way to live Objectivist values to go on strike or to continue fighting the looters in the "outside" world?

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Whenever anyone accuses some person of being 'unfeeling' he means that that person is just. He means that that person has no causeless emotions and will not grant him a feeling which he does not deserve. He means that 'to feel' is to go against reason, against moral values, against reality." (3.4.2.47)

THOUGHT:

Dagny explains to Cherryl one of the conflicts of language in the book. Looters use the word "unfeeling" as an insult, but Dagny explains that in Objectivism feeling is a product of reason and values. What the looters call "feeling" isn't really feeling at all.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"But to think is an act of choice. The key to what you so recklessly call 'human nature'...is the fact that man is a being of volitional consciousness. Reason does not work automatically; thinking is not a mechanical process...you are free to think or to evade the effort. But you are not free to escape from your nature, from the fact that reason is your means of survival." (3.7.1.129)

THOUGHT:

Galt's idea of "volitional consciousness" means that people can choose to use reason to make various life choices. Choice becomes each person's right and responsibility here.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Reality is that which exists; the unreal does not exist; the unreal is merely that negation of existence which is the content of a human consciousness when it attempts to abandon reason. Truth is the recognition of reality; reason, man's only means of knowledge, is his only standard of truth." (3.7.1.161)

THOUGHT:

Galt's views here are part of one of the book's more interesting, and largely implicit, debates on the nature of reality. Galt says reality is "objective," meaning that people don't define it themselves. (So Galt wouldn't have been a fan of *The Matrix*.) But to what extent is Galt defining reality himself here, in opposition to the looters?

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"My morality, the morality of reason, is contained in a single axiom: existence exists - and in a single choice: to live. The rest proceeds from these. To live, man must hold three things as the supreme and ruling values of his life: Reason - Purpose - Self-Esteem. Reason, as his only tool of knowledge - Purpose, as his choice of the happiness which that tool must proceed to achieve - Self-Esteem, as his inviolate certainty that his mind is competent to think and his person is worthy of happiness, which means: is worthy of living." (3.7.1.171)

THOUGHT:

Galt outlines the basic principles of his philosophy here. Life is all about reason, what people use to live well; purpose, how people live a good life; and self-esteem, why they live a good life - for themselves.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Choices

Theme Summary

Revolutionary War hero Patrick Henry was a pretty dramatic dude, best known for his famous either-or statement, "Give me liberty, or give me death." This is an example of what is known as a false dilemma; it's "false" because our pal Patrick could have chosen a third option, like jail. Boiling down a dilemma to two extreme choices creates a dramatic effect.

It's no mistake that Patrick Henry makes a lot of appearances in *Atlas Shrugged*. Many of our main characters either taught at or attended Patrick Henry University. The novel seems to really embrace the either-or choice, too: reality is what it is, you're either for us or against us. In terms of philosophy, this book leaves very little wiggle room.

But philosophy isn't always easy to act on in the real world, and choices are rarely clear-cut or simple. *Atlas Shrugged* frequently complicates its own love of either-or options with characters like Cherryl, who is really lacking in choices, the confused Eddie, the frightened James, and the impotent "looters." Even the strikers and our heroes are unable to always deal in absolutes and black-and-white options. Dagny especially frequently wades through murky options and makes choices that defy the "either-or" of the strikers and the looters, going for a third option instead.

Choices are perhaps more plural than Galt's philosophy suggests. It's possible that Galt and his strikers, much like Patrick Henry, are seeking to create the absolutes and the either-or choices they want to see in the world.

Study Questions

1. Why did Hank choose to quit and go to Atlantis when he did? How was he ready to make that choice at that time?
2. Is there an element of self-sacrifice in Dagny's decision to leave Atlantis in order to be more worthy of John Galt? Or is Dagny living Galt's values more fully than anyone else precisely because she refuses to stay in Atlantis for his sake?
3. Do we see evidence of women having fewer choices than men in the novel? If so, how?
4. What are the criteria for being chosen for admission to Galt's Atlantis? Is it a fair process or not?

Sample Thesis Statements

Dagny is the unintentional epitome, or fulfillment, of Galt's values. By frequently going against both the strikers and the looters, she is a true individual who makes choices for herself alone.

Though Galt expresses his values in terms of either-or choices, the book as a whole demonstrates that either-or options are often more of an ideal than a reality.

Quotes & Thoughts on Choices

QUOTE:

"Every man builds his world in his own image," he said. "He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice. If he abdicates his power, he abdicates the status of man, and the grinding chaos of the irrational is what he achieves as his sphere of existence - by his own choice." (3.2.4.40)

THOUGHT:

Galt here explains the consequences that come from refusing to make choices. We see the consequences of this refusal in scenes like the Taggart Tunnel disaster.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He had burned everything there was to burn within him; he had scattered so many sparks to start so many things - and he wondered whether someone could give him now the spark he needed, now when he felt unable to rise again. He asked himself who had started him and kept him going. Then he raised his head. Slowly, with the greatest effort of his life, he made his body rise until he was able to sit upright.... He never asked that question again. (1.2.1.26).

THOUGHT:

In a climactic moment for Hank, he realizes his own power and makes the choice to keep going. It's interesting that "sparks" are used as a metaphor here; the people involved with the strike are often linked to fire and light symbolism.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Dagny! Help me to remain. To refuse. Even though he's right!" She asked evenly, "To refuse what, Francisco?"

He did not answer, only pressed his face harder against her. (1.5.2.255-7)

THOUGHT:

Francisco has a moment of weakness and begs Dagny to help him refuse to join the strike; but it's notable that even in his moment of weakness, Francisco is still willing to make some sort of choice, rather than refuse to choose at all.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She was looking at the bracelet of blue-green metal.

She felt the movement of something being torn off her wrist, and she heard her own voice saying in the great stillness, very calmly, a voice cold as a skeleton, naked of emotion, "If you are not the coward that I think you are, you will exchange it."

On the palm of her hand, she was extending her diamond bracelet to Lillian. (1.6.1.60-2)

THOUGHT:

Dagny publicly confronts Lillian and forces her to hand over the Rearden Metal bracelet. In a way, Dagny forces Lillian to make a choice, even though Lillian probably didn't see that she had a choice. To refuse would embarrass her.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Ted, you won't be the next one to go?" she had asked him, on his recent visit to New York; she had asked it, trying to smile. "He had answered grimly, "I hope not." "What do you mean you hope? - aren't you sure?" He had said slowly, heavily, "Dagny, I've always thought that I'd rather die than stop working. But so did the men who're gone. It seems impossible to me that I could ever want to quit. But a year ago, it seemed impossible that they ever could.... I can't tell what I'll do when I see it - whatever it

was that they saw when they went." (2.2.1.3)

THOUGHT:

Ted Nielsen hits upon one of the main fears in the book: the fear of not knowing. Not knowing why people are making the choices they are making and what sort of choice you might be confronted with in an unknown situation. The unknown cuts off people's ability to judge and to decide, which causes a lot of anxiety for people who prize their power of rational choice.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Gentlemen," she said, "I do not know what sort of self-fraud you expect to feel that if it's I who name the decision you intend to make, it will be I who'll bear the responsibility for it. Perhaps you believe that if my voice delivers the final blow, it will make me the murderer involved.... I cannot conceive what it is you think you can accomplish by a pretense of this kind, and I will not help to stage it." (2.5.1.33)

THOUGHT:

Dagny delivers a smack-down to the Board here by refusing to make a difficult choice for them .

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Her only power was the power of his own virtues. What if he chose to withdraw it? (2.4.1.58)

THOUGHT:

Hank begins to realize the power of choosing retreat here. This paves the way to his joining the strike, which is all about choosing to do nothing in order to accomplish something.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Mr. Rearden," said Francisco, his voice solemnly calm, "if you saw Atlas, the giant who holds the world on his shoulders, if you saw that he stood... his arms trembling but still trying to hold the world aloft with the last of his strength, and the greater his effort the heavier the world bore down on his shoulders - what would you tell him to do?"

"I...don't know. What...could he do? What would you tell him?

"To shrug." (2.2.6.13)

THOUGHT:

Francisco handily explains the title here, noting that the metaphorical Atlas can choose a nonviolent way to combat violence. This illustrates the book's peaceful protest theme.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She had said she would give her life for one more year on the railroad. She was back; but this was not the joy of working; it was only the clear, cold peace of a decision reached - and the stillness of unadmitted pain. (2.9.1.5)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that Dagny finds a sort of "peace" in the midst of

pain. Peace for her comes from making a decision, however difficult. In a sense, the only way people experience any emotions at all is through choice. We can see the contrast with the apathetic, beaten-down people in Starnesville, who don't choose anything.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"There's only a worn thread holding the continent together. There will be one train a day, then one train a week - then the Taggart Bridge will collapse and -"

"No, it won't!"

It was her voice and they whirled to her. Her face was white, but calmer than it had been when she had answered them last.

Slowly, Galt rose to his feet and inclined his head, as in acceptance of a verdict. "You have made your decision" he said.

"I have." (3.2.6.68-72)

THOUGHT:

Dagny's choice here seems a bit like an involuntary reflex, which is interesting given the amount of emphasis Galt and Co. place on rational decision-making.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Such is the future you are capable of winning. It requires a struggle; so does any human value. All life is a purposeful struggle, and your only choice the choice of a goal. Do you wish to continue the battle of your present or do you wish to fight for

my world?" (3.7.1.397)

THOUGHT:

Galt delivers his version of the St. Crispin's Day speech (a famous pre-battle speech from Shakespeare's *Henry V*) when he calls everyone to join his crusade. There are shades of Aragorn from *The Return of the King* here, too.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Better come along, Mr. Willers," said the conductor.

"No!" cried Eddie, clutching the metal rung as if he wanted his hand to grow fast to it.

The barker shrugged. "Well, it's your funeral!" (3.10.2.97-99)

THOUGHT:

Eddie takes his refusal to let go of everything the railroad stands for (civilization, achievement, reason, hard work, heroism) to literal extremes here when he refuses to abandon the broken-down train.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Happiness

Theme Summary

Goldfrapp's song "Happiness" fits rather well with this book. It's all about making choices and finding a nice crowd. It's also a rather tongue-in-cheek dig at cults, which is rather fitting for Galt's strike, but we'll get back to that one. In the song, and in the book, the pursuit of happiness hinges on positive choices and finding the right crowd of people to be with. But in *Atlas Shrugged*, happiness isn't just a by-product of an after-school special mentality. Instead, happiness is the ultimate goal of life and the sole responsibility of each individual. As Galt notes in his radio address, no one should live for other people and others' happiness. Happiness takes commitment and hard work. So, citing the preamble to the U.S. Constitution, Galt and his followers make the "pursuit of happiness" the main goal of life.

But you're just waiting for us to explain the cult thing, right? Well, Galt definitely embraces individualism and says that everyone has to make his or her own happiness in the world. That's all well and good, but Galt feels that *his* value system is the only way to achieve happiness. He wants everyone to realize how awesome *his* system is and join him, which sounds a bit like a cult if you ask us. But we'll let you fight that out amongst yourselves.

Study Questions

1. James is always arguing that people should make others happy, but does he practice what he preaches? Or does he really mean that other people should make *him* happy?
2. Galt created his Atlantis hideaway as a place of refuge and happiness for others, not just himself. Does this at all contradict his championing of selfishness?

3. In the book, are selfish pursuits and selfless ones at odds, or not?
4. After their encounter in the Taggart tunnels, Galt tells Dagny that pain shouldn't define a person's life, happiness should. Do other characters follow this idea successfully, or is it just a nice idea that is almost impossible to pull off?

Sample Thesis Statements

Dagny has a masochistic streak; she enjoys a certain amount of pain and suffering.

Quotes & Thoughts on Happiness

QUOTE:

She was speaking with a swift, bright certainty, conscious of nothing but the joy of performing her natural function in her natural world where nothing could take precedence over the act of offering a solution to a problem. (3.2.5.17)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that problem-solving, thinking, and hard work are described as Dagny's "natural" functions here. Galt asks people to choose his value system, but it seems that many of his values, and the happiness available through them, are dependent on one's "natural" ability. Are some people just unable to achieve the same level of happiness?

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He glanced at her and added slowly, a slight emphasis as sole change in the impersonal tone of his voice, "No one's happiness but my own is in my power to achieve or to destroy." (3.2.5.77)

THOUGHT:

Choice and personal responsibility are a part of happiness, too. In this novel, happiness is the goal of life, and everyone has to make his or her own.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He smiled, the unchanged, insolent, brilliant smile of his childhood.

"Hi, Slug!"

She heard herself answering, irresistibly, helplessly, happily:

"Hi, Frisco!" (1.5.2.303-6)

THOUGHT:

The theme of childhood comes into play here, as Dagny recalls her childhood with Francisco and greets him happily, despite their recent estrangement.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Thank you," she said softly.

"For what?"

"For...for the way you sound"

"How do I sound? Name it Dagny."

"You sound...as if you're happy."

"I am - in exactly the same way you are. Don't tell me what you feel. I know it. But, you see, the measure of hell you're able to endure is the measure of your love." (3.2.6.96-101)

THOUGHT:

Francisco presents one of the book's more paradoxical ideas here: that some happiness exists even in the midst of pain. Francisco underwent a lot of bad times when he joined the strike, but by living his values fully, he found some degree of happiness.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I can't ask you to forgive me - we're far beyond such terms - and the only atonement I can offer you is the fact that I am happy. That I am happy, my darling, not that I suffer. I am happy that I have seen the truth - even if the power of sight is all that's left to me now." (3.3.3.71)

THOUGHT:

Hank takes a rather non-traditional view of happiness, and of breaking-up with someone, when he finds happiness in the truth. Hank also importantly links happiness and "sight" here, which ties into ideas of not living in denial and of facing reality.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Are they? They have a weapon against you. It's their only weapon, but it's a terrible one. Ask yourself what it is, some time."

"Where do you see any evidence of it?"

"In the unforgivable fact that you're as unhappy as you are." (1.6.1.323-5)

THOUGHT:

Francisco calls Hank out on his unhappiness, which fits with the Objectivist idea that happiness is the goal of life.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She could not believe that the young boy laughing in her face was Ellis Wyatt. The tense, scornful face she remembered, now had the purity, the eagerness, the joyous benevolence of a child in the kind of world for which he had been intended. (1.8.7.52)

THOUGHT:

Ellis has been transformed by Atlantis, which is closely linked to themes of youth and childhood. The idea of regaining the happiness of youth appears throughout the book, as well as the idea that happiness shouldn't die with youth.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She heard the rising, accelerating sound of the wheels - and

some theme of music, heard to the rhythm of the wheels, kept tugging at her mind, growing louder - it burst suddenly within the cab, but she knew that it was only in her mind: the *Fifth Concerto* by Richard Halley - she thought: did he write it for this? had he known a feeling such as this? (1.8.7.50)

THOUGHT:

A lot of important symbols are tied together here: motion, the railroad, and music. All of these things embody happiness for Dagny since they express her values.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

What he knew, what he had discovered tonight, was that his recaptured love of existence had not been given back to him by the return of his desire for her - but that the desire had returned after he had regained his world, the love, the values and the sense of his world - and that the desire was not an answer to her body, but a celebration of himself and of his will to live. (2.1.4.105)

THOUGHT:

Hank unites themes of love, desire, sex, and happiness here. Love and sex can be a way to express happiness and to "celebrate" life.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"It's just a thought that disturbs me once in a while....I thought about my first ball....I keep thinking that parties are intended to be celebrations and celebrations should be only for those who

have something to celebrate." (1.6.1.361)

THOUGHT:

Dagny's first party, and the disappointment it brought her, is a recurring motif in the book. She wishes people were able to come together to celebrate life, and she later discovers that people with Galt's values are.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man - every man - is an end in himself, he exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose." (3.7.1.143).

THOUGHT:

Galt defines Objectivism in a nutshell here, as an individualist doctrine holding that living for oneself is the highest form of morality.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Love

Theme Summary

At the start of *The Muppet Movie*, Kermit the Frog plays the banjo and sings a cool song called "The Rainbow Connection," a call to all the "lovers and dreamers" of the world. In the movie, Kermit and his friends set out to pursue their passion of making it as entertainers in Hollywood.

John Galt is kind of like Kermit the Frog. Really. Like Kermit, Galt unites his friends and his chosen family on a quest to pursue a passion: for life, happiness, work, values, a soul mate...basically, all kinds of love are united here. There is no break between different kinds of love in this book, whether it's romantic love, brotherly love, love of work, or love of certain ideals. All kinds of love are united by a common set of values, which Galt outlines in his radio address. By bringing together all these different kinds of love, the Atlantis crowd is living in a sort of harmony.

The point is that in the world of *Atlas Shrugged*, love is a really positive, all-encompassing thing that doesn't allow things like jealousy to screw it up (see, for example, Dagny's love quadrangle). On the flip side, we see a lot of examples of love being destructive and harmful among the looters of the world. Lacking Galt's values, these people speak of "brotherly love," sacrifice, and pity but end up causing destruction and harm.

Study Questions

1. How are Dagny's values reflected in her love for John? How are John's values reflected in his love for Dagny?
2. Characters like Hank and Francisco don't seem to get jealous. Why not?

3. Does James Taggart love anything at all?
4. Is there a connection between Dagny's love of her railroad and her love of Richard Halley's music?

Sample Thesis Statements

Dagny's love of her railroad is ultimately damaging, since it leads her to stay and suffer too long in the "outside" world.

Self-love and high self-esteem play a hugely important role in romantic love here.

Quotes & Thoughts on Love

QUOTE:

"What do you care which records? Richard Halley. She loves the music of Richard Halley. Outside the railroad, that's the only thing she loves." (1.3.3.7)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that Eddie says that Dagny *only* loves Halley's music and her railroad. In a sense, these two things are the expression of Dagny's values, which define what she loves and why she loves. These two symbols express the "type" of love Dagny is capable of feeling.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

There was some unbreakable link between her love for her work

and the desire of her body; as if one gave her the right to the other, the right and the meaning; as if one were the completion of the other - and the desire would never be satisfied, except by a being of equal greatness. (1.8.2.15)

THOUGHT:

The link between the mind and the body is a running theme throughout the novel; the love of the mind is expressed through the body.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Because it took her a moment to regain the art of breathing, she realized for the first time how much that voice meant to her. "All right...Francisco," she answered. They needed to say nothing else. She thought, replacing the receiver, that his return was natural and as she had always expected it to happen, except that she had not expected her sudden need to pronounce his name or the stab of happiness she felt when pronouncing it. (1.5.2.222).

THOUGHT:

It's notable that Dagny never comes right out and says she loved Francisco until they reconcile. In a way it's as if she refuses to remember how much she loved him because it hurts too much. Scenes like this reveal the full depth of her feelings for Francisco.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She thought: To find a feeling that would hold, as their sum, as

their final expression, the purpose of all the things she loved on earth....To find a consciousness like her own, who would be the meaning of her world, as she would be of his....A man who existed only in her knowledge of her capacity for an emotion she had never felt, but would give her life to experience. (1.8.2.14)

THOUGHT:

Dagny's quest is for more than just a "Prince Charming." The man she loves must embody her entire value system. He must be more of a kindred spirit rather than a romantic "soul mate."

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I am thinking of the fifteen years that Sebastián d'Anconia had to wait for the woman he loved: He did not know whether he would ever find her again, whether she would survive...whether she would wait for him.... But when he carried her across the threshold of his house, as the first Señora d'Anconia of a new world, he knew that the battle was won, that they were free, that nothing threatened her and nothing would ever hurt her again." (2.5.1.240)

THOUGHT:

The epic saga of Francisco's ancestor provides us with significant insight into his motives and hopes. It's important that this story doesn't act as a prophecy; in a book with lots of "living legends," this legacy doesn't come true: Francisco doesn't get the girl.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Such was the code that the world had accepted and such was the key to the code: that it hooked man's love of existence to a circuit of torture, so that only the man who had nothing to offer would have nothing to fear, so that the virtues which made life possible and the values which gave it meaning became its agents of destruction.... (2.6.3.77)

THOUGHT:

Hank realizes the true evil of the looters' system here - they flip everything around so that desires become sins and joy becomes torture.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Dagny, he thought, you would not let me do it if you knew, you will hate me for it if you learn - but I cannot let you pay my debts. . . .

I love you, he said to the girl on the flatcar, feeling as if the light of that summer's sun were touching his forehead, as if he, too, were standing under an open sky over an unobstructed earth, with nothing left to him but himself. (2.6.3.107-8)

THOUGHT:

It's significant that Hank says "I love you" to his memory of Dagny. In a way he rewrites history, if only in his own mind, saying what he felt that day when he first saw her. Later, it's notable that Hank tells Dagny he loves her in person in order to "redeem" their past relationship. Love has the power to fix the past and to wipe out past pain here, which is an idea we also see in Dagny's relationships with Francisco and John.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He made a step toward Francisco; he asked, pointing to Dagny, his voice low and strangely unlike his own voice, as if it neither came from him nor were addressed to a living person, "Is this the woman you love?"

Francisco closed his eyes.

"Don't ask him that!" The cry was Dagny's.

"Is this the woman you love?"

Francisco answered, looking at her. "Yes."

Rearden's hand rose, swept down and slapped Francisco's face. (2.9.1.104-9)

THOUGHT:

This is one of the only scenes of jealousy we get in the whole book, which is both notable and surprising. Hank is jealous of Francisco because of his value issues. He later realizes that his love for Dagny is a reflection of his own values, so there's no need to feel jealousy over others Dagny might love as a reflection of her own values.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"But I know that they're doomed, both of them, and so am I , and so is everybody, and she was all I had left....It was so great, to be alive, it was such a wonderful chance, I didn't know that I loved it and that that was our love, hers and mine and yours - but the world is perishing and we cannot stop it. Why are we destroying ourselves?...Why should I care that she's sleeping with Hank Rearden?...Oh God! - what's the matter with you?"

(2.9.2.44)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that Eddie puts his love for Dagny in terms of their shared values and love for life. It's more than just him being attracted to her or admiring her.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"The only man I ever loved." It came from Ken Danagger, who had never expressed anything more personal than, "Look here, Rearden." He thought: Why had we let it go? Why had we both been condemned...to an exile among dreary strangers who made us give up all desire for rest, for friendship, for the sound of human voices? Could I now reclaim a single hour spent listening to my brother Philip and give it to Ken Danagger? (2.2.6.5)

THOUGHT:

Ken and Hank give us a great example of a different kind of love here: one of friendship and brotherhood. Their relationship is significant in a book that largely focuses on romantic relationships. Friendship is an important part of the strike, even though it receives somewhat less attention.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She noticed that Dr. Akston's eyes kept coming back to her, as if with the quiet pride of displaying his students to an appreciative observer. His conversation kept returning to a single theme, in the manner of a father who has found a listener interested in his most cherished subject. (3.2.4.25)

THOUGHT:

Dr. Akston is notable for being practically the only positive parent-figure we get in the whole novel. His love for his three "sons" demonstrates the theme of choosing your own family.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"What you meant to me can never be changed. But the man I met - he is the love I wanted to reach long before I knew that he existed, and I think he will remain beyond my reach, but that I love him will be enough to keep me living."

He took her hand and pressed it to his lips. "Then you know what I feel," he said, "and why I am still happy." (3.3.3.82-83)

THOUGHT:

For Dagny, the fact that she feels the love she does for John is a positive thing, since it reflects her values. In a way, unrequited love isn't an issue here, because her love is about herself and her values, not about wanting a reciprocal sentiment from John. It's also important to note that Dagny wasn't looking for her dream guy her whole life; she was looking for a way to embody and express her values and her joy for living. Within Galt's value system, all emotions come back to the individual.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I want to be loved for myself - not for anything I do or have or say or think. For myself - not for my body or mind or words or works or actions."

"But then...what is yourself?"

"If you loved me, you wouldn't ask it." (3.4.1.203-5)

THOUGHT:

James's wacky definition of love contrasts greatly to Galt's. James sees love as something people "owe" him. Love is about what other people can do for him, not what he feels for other people or what reflects his values.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I was here. I was waiting for you. I love you, Dagny. I love you more than my life, I who have taught men how life is to be loved." (3.5.3.141)

THOUGHT:

Leave it to Galt to be egotistical when declaring his love for someone. Of course, that's the point of his philosophy - that love is more about yourself than the other person.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Sex

Theme Summary

The celebration of sex in *Atlas Shrugged* was fairly controversial in straight-laced 1950s America. Sex is an expression of the strikers' value system, which prizes individual happiness and the uniting of the mind and body. Denying individual physical impulses is as bad as denying individual happiness.

Other characters take a very negative view of sex, treating it as shameful or tawdry. People who condemn sex are themselves condemned here, largely by Francisco and Dagny, who each give speeches defending sexuality.

This isn't to say that Galt and his strikers are advocating a sexual free-for-all. They actually promote highly discriminating sex, between people who love and/or admire each other. In other words, the mental and the physical should reflect each other. But Galt and his followers do seem to largely ignore or dismiss conventions like marriage and celibacy, which puts them at odds with society at large. Sex is not a sin in Galt's value system.

Study Questions

1. How do people like Galt, Dagny, and Francisco connect love and sex?
2. Why is Hank so obsessed with finding out who Dagny's first lover was? Is there any thematic significance to this obsession?
3. Are there any similarities between Hank's and Lillian's views on sex?
4. Men in the novel seem to either view Dagny as a sexual object - a dirty mistress - or a sort of pure, untouched

goddess. Are there any connections between these two different views? How are these views significant in terms of the book's themes?

Sample Thesis Statements

The fact that both Eddie and Hank treat Dagny like an untouchable queen reflects broader social views about sex and gender.

Sex in and of itself is not viewed positively in this book, only sex as an expression of love.

Quotes & Thoughts on Sex

QUOTE:

They kept their secret from the knowledge of others, not as a shameful guilt, but as a thing that was immaculately theirs, beyond anyone's right of debate or appraisal. She knew the general doctrine on sex, held by people in one form or another, the doctrine that sex was an ugly weakness of man's lower nature, to be condoned regretfully. She experienced an emotion of chastity that made her shrink not from the desires of her body, but from any contact with the minds who held this doctrine. (1.5.2.96)

THOUGHT:

Like so many concepts in the novel, sexual morals have to be translated and flipped around in the Objectivist value system. So Dagny, fittingly, experiences "chastity" not in regard to sex itself but in regard to the people who preach that sex is ugly and sinful.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

The course led them to the moment when, in answer to the highest of one's values, in an admiration not to be expressed by any other form of tribute, one's spirit makes one's body become the tribute.... (1.8.7.100)

THOUGHT:

The style here is interesting - the scene begins by discussing Francisco and Dagny, but the style shifts from "them" to "one," which emphasizes the broader, philosophical statement the passage makes. This sort of style shift, from specific character to broad ideas, happens a lot in the novel.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"What I feel for you is contempt. But it's nothing compared to the contempt I feel for myself. I don't love you. I've never loved anyone. I wanted you from the first moment I saw you. I wanted you as one wants a whore - for the same reason and purpose." (1.9.1.10)

THOUGHT:

Hank parrots society's ideas about sex to Dagny, even though his actions and his deep feelings for her ironically undermine everything he is saying. This shows how influential society's moral code is and how hard it is to break free from. (This also wins the award for being the worst morning-after speech in history.)

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"The man who is proudly certain of his own value, will want the highest type of woman he can find, the woman he admires...because only the possession of a heroine will give him the sense of achievement, not the possession of a brainless slut....He does not seek to gain his value, he seeks to express it. There is no conflict between the standards of his mind and the desires of his body." (2.4.3.88)

THOUGHT:

Francisco's Sex Talk is the most important thematic statement about sex in the novel. Francisco explains that sex, in an Objectivist value system, is about the individual and reflects a person's values and self-esteem. An individual living for his own happiness will treat sex as a good thing and will only have sex with someone he loves.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He did not know it, he did not think of it, he was past the need of words, but in the moment when he felt the response of her body to his, he felt also the unadmitted knowledge that that which he had called her depravity was her highest virtue - this capacity of hers to feel the joy of being, as he felt it. (2.1.4.106)

THOUGHT:

Hank highlights the theme of switching word meanings around again when he realizes that what society calls "depravity" is really a "virtue." It's also interesting that Hank is described as "beyond words" here; this happens to various characters in the novel and emphasizes the depth of feeling our heroes, whom the

looters often call "unemotional," have.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"No matter what happens in the future, we'll always be what we were to each other, you and I, because you'll always love me."..."Will I want to sleep with you? Desperately. Will I envy the man who does? Sure. But what does that matter? It's so much - just to have you here, to love you and to be alive." (3.2.2.71-3)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that Francisco unites his past, present, and future with Dagny here, noting that their bond won't ever break, even though the nature of it will change. Sex here is just one way to express one's love.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She lay on her back, her palms pressed to the sheet at her sides, to stop herself from rising and walking into his room, knowing that she was capable even of that.... (3.2.3.14)

THOUGHT:

This is one of the few scenes where Dagny seems almost out of control. Her fight against her desire for John is interesting, since she would argue that sexual desires shouldn't be ignored.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"For two years, I had been Hank Rearden's mistress. Let there be no misunderstanding about it: I am saying this, not as a shameful confession, but with the highest sense of pride." (3.3.3.16)

THOUGHT:

It makes sense that Dagny, whose values are the opposite of those of society, would consider being a "mistress" something to be proud of.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He jerked her closer, to stifle the sight of his own shudder. His hands were going through the automatic motions of intimacy - and she complied, but in a manner that made him feel as if the beats of her arteries under his touch were snickering giggles. (3.4.3.13)

THOUGHT:

The awkward and spiteful sex scene between James and Lillian greatly contrasts to the scenes we get with Dagny and her various lovers. The diction, or word choice, is telling here: James is described as using "automatic motions," while Lillian seems to be "snickering."

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

[I]t contained her pride in herself and that it should be she whom he had chosen as his mirror, that it should be her body which was now giving him the sum of his existence, as his body

was giving her the sum of hers. (3.5.3.99)

THOUGHT:

The use of the word "mirror" suggests how sex is viewed in Galt's Objectivist value system. When sex is an expression of love and values, a person's lover becomes a "mirror" for those values.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Power

Theme Summary

There seems to be a frightening power vacuum in *Atlas Shrugged*. The world is collapsing and no one is doing much about it. We see a lot of examples of apathetic people who either have no power at all, or have power and choose not to use it, or don't use it effectively. From the defeated residents of places like Starnesville to the frightened and useless looters, nobody seems able or willing to act to avoid disaster. And the people who could swoop in to save the day are on strike.

Atlas Shrugged is hugely concerned with power and the lack of it, and it really redefines what power is. Power isn't just about strength and action, either physical or mental. The "looters" are all obsessed with having and using power, but it's a power based on terror and fear, and used in the service of destruction and anarchy. But Galt and his strikers have the power of resistance and of knowledge, and the power to reveal the looters for what they really are.

The looters are a bit like the man behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*. The "great and powerful" (and loud) wizard is nothing more than a dumpy man with a fancy machine. But that dumpy man is very powerful in an insidious way. He has the power to make people believe things, to influence how they think and behave. This is the kind of power the looters have, and this is the kind of power that Galt wages his philosophical war against.

Study Questions

1. Why do the looters need a "moral sanction" from people? Why don't they just use force to take over?

2. Are Hank and Dagny really powerful in the real world? What sort of power do they have and what do they lack?
3. How does Galt prove himself more powerful than the looters?

Sample Thesis Statements

All looters have the same sort of goals in mind and seek the same type of power over people.

The looters each have very different ideas of what power is.

Quotes & Thoughts on Power

QUOTE:

Motive power - thought Dagny, looking up at the Taggart Building in the twilight - was its first need; motive power, to keep that building standing; movement, to keep it immovable. (1.4.1.1)

THOUGHT:

Motive power is a running theme throughout the book. The idea of motors symbolizes Galt's strike and his value system, which proposes that the mind propels the world.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

The sounds of torture became defiance, the statement of agony became a hymn to a distant vision for whose sake anything was

worth enduring, even this. It was the song of rebellion - and of a desperate quest. (1.4.1.37)

THOUGHT:

Halley's *Fourth Concerto* seems to rebel against the world of the looters, expressing power by refusing to submit quietly. This concept of rebellion is important in the book: many of our heroes are trapped in bad situations with limited resources.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Dan," she said through her teeth, "fight it."

He raised his head. His eyes were empty. "No," he said, "it would be wrong. I'm just selfish."

"Oh, damn that rotten tripe! You know better than that!"

"I don't know . . ." His voice was very tired. (1.4.6.31-4)

THOUGHT:

Dan has taken in the looters' ideas to such an extent that he can't see a way around them, even though he knows they are wrong. He doesn't realize his own power to fight back here and instead is beaten down and defeated.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

There was no action she could take against the men of undefined thought, of unnamed motives, of unstated purposes, of unspecified morality. There was nothing she could say to

them - nothing would be heard or answered. What were the weapons, she thought, in a realm where reason was not a weapon any longer? (1.10.3.26)

THOUGHT:

This concept of "undefined thought" is a crucial one: it describes how the looters operate, with denial and evasions, and is at the root of much of the fear in the book. For Dagny, it's frightening not knowing what's going on and feeling that her traditional weapons, like reason, are useless. In a way this is why Galt's strike started: reason stopped being effective, so Galt set out to prove his point nonverbally, through tangible consequences.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"They need some sort of sanction from us. I don't know the nature of that sanction - but, Dagny, I know that if we value our lives we must not give it to them." (2.1.4.98)

THOUGHT:

The "sanction of the victim" is one of the book's most important recurring phrases and ideas. Galt's strike is about refusing to give the looters a "sanction," or a go-ahead.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them...you create a nation of lawbreakers - and then you cash in on guilt." (2.2.3.39)

THOUGHT:

Ferris's idea of power is based on fear and psychological control. It's interesting that he uses the term "cash in on guilt." Looters don't like money, but they use something that resembles a money system in the way they "trade" favors and "cash in" on people.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"We won't have to decide. Nobody will be permitted to decide anything. It will be decided once and for all." (2.6.1.135)

THOUGHT:

James is always wanting to avoid having to make a choice. Here he sketches out his idea of a utopia, where the government will use its power to decide everything "once and for all" so that no one will ever have to decide anything again.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

One could prove nothing to a tribunal that had no stated policy, no defined procedure, no rules of evidence, no binding principles - a tribunal, such as the Unification Board, that pronounced men guilty or innocent as it saw fit, with no standards of guilt or innocence. (2.7.3.190)

THOUGHT:

We get a view of how oppressive the government is getting here. Washington is powerful enough to get away with pretty much anything without having to answer for it.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"I will put an end to this once and for all," he said. His voice was clear and without any feeling.... "I will stop the motor of the world." (2.10.1.125)

THOUGHT:

Galt makes one of the book's most decisive statements about power and rebellion here. If motors represent power, then how much power must Galt have to stop them all?

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Every dictator is a mystic, and every mystic is a potential dictator. A mystic craves obedience from men, not their agreement. He wants them to surrender their consciousness to his assertions...." (3.7.1.304)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that Galt links dictators with "mystics," or people who rule through fear instead of reason. This idea appears in a lot of political theory. For instance, scholars have noted that dictators like Stalin and Mao had "cults of personality," meaning that they built up myths around themselves and demanded that people trust, love, and obey them completely.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"And it was discovered," said Dr. Ferris, "that there are certain frequencies of sound vibration which no structure, organic or inorganic, can withstand." (3.3.1.59)

THOUGHT:

Ferris's description of Project X serves as a metaphor for the way the looters operate. The "sound vibrations" of their words and ideas are essentially destroying the country, much as Project X destroys those poor goats.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Eddie, what do we care about people like him? We're driving an express, and they're riding on the roof, making a lot of noise about being leaders. Why should we care? We have enough power to carry them along - haven't we?" (1.8.3.82)

THOUGHT:

Hank assumes that he and his friends can just ignore the looters and to go about their business. But he discovers that "carrying them along" grants them a sanction, which gives them power.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Language and Communication

Theme Summary

It's rather fitting that this theme is the unspoken heart of *Atlas Shrugged*. The novel doesn't often refer to issues of language outright, but it's a theme that is constantly present in the way people speak, or don't speak, to each other.

We get an ongoing series of contrasts between the way Galt and his strikers speak and the way looters like James Taggart speak. The way the action-oriented, plainspoken, and blunt Atlantis crowd use language is opposed to the evasive, vague, and manipulative way the looters do. The two groups often seem incapable of being on the same page. Each group frequently fails to understand the other. In fact, each group seems to constantly confuse and even scare the other side.

But in the midst of all this complicated communication, values are constantly being transmitted, consciously or not. At its core, communication is about expressing certain values, and people's communication styles say a great deal about who they are as people.

Study Questions

1. The book's protagonists -Dagny, Hank, John Galt, Francisco - all have very similar speech styles. What is the significance of these similarities? Are there any notable differences among these characters' speaking styles?
2. Do certain sections of Galt's radio speech have a certain audience in mind? How does Galt's speaking style clue us in to whom he is addressing?
3. We get a lot of examples of layered speeches in this book,

speeches aimed at both a big crowd and a specific individual. (Dagny's radio speech is one example.) What are some of the various styles employed in these layered speeches, and how are these speeches significant to the narrative as a whole?

4. Before Cherryl commits suicide, the narrator intervenes to explain her inner thoughts to us, rather than let Cherryl speak for herself. Why this unusual intervention on the narrator's part?

Sample Thesis Statements

Despite Galt's belief, language is not always tied to reason. A lack of understanding does not always prevent people from speaking effectively.

James Taggart is aware of the full meaning and implications of everything he says.

James Taggart is unaware of and in denial about the implications of what he says.

Quotes & Thoughts on Language and Communication

QUOTE:

Sitting as a helpless spectator, a minority member, at one of the Board meetings, she felt a strange evasiveness in the air of the room, in every speech, in every argument, as if the real reason of their decision were never stated, but clear to everyone except herself. (1.3.2.23)

THOUGHT:

Dagny experiences helplessness here in something like a foreign environment where she doesn't speak the language. It's like walking in on a conversation and suspecting that they were all just talking about you behind your back.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Dagny, they didn't say it!...They haven't really said it, yet it's there - and it - isn't. That's what's so monstrous about it." (1.7.4.17)

THOUGHT:

We get a lot of contrasts between blunt, plainspoken people and manipulative, evasive people in this book. Eddie suggests that it's somehow dishonorable to not come right out and say what you mean.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Men are not open to truth or reason. They cannot be reached by a rational argument. The mind is powerless against them. Yet we have to deal with them. If we want to accomplish anything, we have to deceive them into letting us accomplish it." (1.7.5.97)

THOUGHT:

Stadler's contempt for humanity impacts how he communicates with others; he advocates dumbing things down and "tricking" people into doing things. But Stadler creates a self-fulfilling prophecy here; he won't deal with people in terms of reason and he ultimately finds himself surrounded by people who refuse to

accept reason.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He approached, stopped, looked at her and smiled.

"Hello, Dagny," he said.

In a single shock of emotion, she knew everything the two words were intended to tell her. It was forgiveness, understanding, acknowledgment. It was a salute. (1.7.1.34-6)

THOUGHT:

Members of Galt's crowd tend to say what they think, but they also communicate nonverbally. How is their nonverbal communication different from the nonverbal communication and body language of the looters?

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Do you want us to quote all the things you said?"

"I hope I may trust you to be sure and quote them. Would you oblige me by taking this down verbatim? She paused to see their pencils ready, then dictated: 'Miss Taggart says - quote - I expect to make a pile of money on the John Galt Line. I will have earned it. Close quote. Thank you so much." (1.8.5.32-33)

THOUGHT:

Dagny doesn't often get to be this funny, so this scene is memorable. She mocks the reporters by throwing the words

they use to insult her back in their faces.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Orren Boyle and Bertram Scudder were men who used words as a public instrument, to be avoided in the privacy of one's own mind. Words were a commitment, carrying implications which they did not wish to face. (2.2.4.6)

THOUGHT:

Words are part of the looters' avoidance tactics. They conceal the looters' true purposes not only from others but from themselves.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

James Taggart saw Lillian Rearden drift casually toward him at the one moment when he chanced to be alone in the dim corner between a potted palm and a window. He stopped and waited to let her approach. He could not guess her purpose, but this was the manner which, in the code he understood, meant that he had better hear her. (2.2.4.50)

THOUGHT:

James and Lillian use a sort of unspoken language here to start up a conversation, which itself will use a sort of code. It's fascinating how complex the looters' forms of communication are. They spend so much time and energy coming up with ways to avoid certain truths when it would take less effort to just speak up and face reality.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"There was a time when men were afraid that somebody would reveal some secret of theirs that was unknown to their fellows. Nowadays, they're afraid that somebody will name what everybody knows." (2.2.4.187)

THOUGHT:

This observation by Francisco really sums up the state of the looters' regime. The looters are ignoring an elephant in the room and have, illogically, turned obvious truths into secrets.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"So they'll bless and follow anyone who gives them a justification for not thinking. Anyone who makes a virtue - a highly intellectual virtue - out of what they know to be their sin, their weakness, and their guilt."

"And you propose to pander this to them?"

"That is the road to popularity." (2.1.1.76-8)

THOUGHT:

Ferris uses language as a way to control people, putting into practice Stadler's ideas about manipulating an ignorant society.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She had never believed that there were men with whom a certain method, which she had never used, would work; such men were not hired by Taggart Transcontinental and she had never been forced to deal with them before.

"Do you know who I am?" she asked, in the cold, overbearing tone of a personal threat. (2.10.2.150)

THOUGHT:

Dagny is discovering here that she has to deal with people in crummy ways. And the "overbearing" tone she adopts is effective, almost as if the person on the phone were expecting someone in such a powerful position as hers to be rude and condescending, and would only respond to this kind of treatment.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Their goal is not the era of pre-science, but the era of pre-language. Their purpose is to deprive you of the concept on which man's mind, his life, and his culture depend: the concept of an *objective* reality." (3.7.1.283)

THOUGHT:

Galt's comments on "pre-language" tie in with a major theme in the book: that of historical backslide. Multiple characters note how the looters seem to be sending everyone back in time to the Dark Ages.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Fear

Theme Summary

It's fitting that the first lines of *Atlas Shrugged* are ones of fear, given that the novel depicts a dystopian world and an impending apocalyptic collapse of society. Things like that do tend to inspire a little fear. What people fear in the novel (perhaps even more than what they love) tells us a lot about their characters and the book's overall philosophy.

There are two opposite fears here: the fear of change and the fear of standing still. While James begs for stability and panics at the idea of uncontrolled change, Dagny panics when her train stops moving, and is horrified to see the world grinding to a halt. Both fears are actually two sides of the same coin; they each see world destruction as the end result of their respective fears.

Fear is a universal constant in a world going to pieces, but it is also a character barometer. People in this book are defined by how they handle fear, how they define fear, and how they conquer fear or let it consume them.

Study Questions

1. Eddie is at the center of two of the book's most frightening episodes: the ominous beginning and the collapse of society. What is Eddie's role in these episodes? How is he tied to themes of dread and fear?
2. Dagny often pushes her emotions aside, especially her fear. Is this a good attitude or a harmful one? Does it make her strong or weak?
3. Is John Galt ever afraid? What is his attitude toward fear?
4. What exactly do the looters fear in this book?

Sample Thesis Statements

James Taggart is the character most defined by fear in the book, although his fears are the least well defined.

Eddie is the character through whom we experience fear most clearly.

Quotes & Thoughts on Fear

QUOTE:

Eddie Willers looked away. He had never liked the sight of that calendar. It disturbed him, in a manner he could not explain or define. The feeling seemed to blend in with his sense of uneasiness; it had the same quality. (1.1.1.11)

THOUGHT:

The calendar crops up as an interesting symbol in the book. It seems like an omen, a sort of countdown to doom. Eddie feels it's a reminder that time is slipping away toward some sort of terrible end, which ties in with the general feeling of dread that dominates the book.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"We must not worry. I heard a speech that said it is useless to worry or to blame anyone. Nobody can help what he does, that is the way things made him. There is nothing we can do about anything. We must learn to bear it." (1.6.1.407)

THOUGHT:

This conversation occurs at Hank's anniversary party and it shows how people are opting to ignore or just accept fear as part of their lives. This sort of defeatist attitude culminates in places like Starnesville, where people live in terrible conditions and can't bring themselves to care.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"'You see? Is there ever any reason to be afraid?'...She said that, because she knows - I've never told her, but she knows...that I'm afraid...Yes I am...I don't know...I wouldn't be afraid if I knew of what, I could do something about it." (1.8.1.1)

THOUGHT:

Eddie again raises the theme of the fear of the unknown.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

It seemed to her that some destroyer was moving soundlessly through the country and the lights were dying at his touch - someone, she thought bitterly, who had reversed the principle of the Twentieth Century motor and was now turning kinetic energy into static. (2.2.1.6)

THOUGHT:

Dagny's notion of the "destroyer" - with all the negative connotations of that word - embodies the fear and mystery surrounding the disappearances.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

People were running out, running to telephones, running to one another, clutching or pushing the bodies around them at random. These men, the most powerful men in the country...had become a pile of rubble, clattering in the wind of panic, the rubble left of a structure when its key pillar had been cut.

. . . Three persons stood immovably still, like three pillars spaced through the room, the lines of their sight cutting across the spread of the wreckage: Dagny, looking at Francisco - Francisco and Rearden, looking at each other. (2.2.4.353-357)

THOUGHT:

Francisco sets off a panic when he announces that his company stock is crashing, revealing the unstable and fragile nature of the looters' world system. The looters are very hard to pin down, but their system, based on equal parts denial, greed, and fear, topples fairly easily. The end of this scene also provides some foreshadowing with the image of three of our heroes standing alone amidst the rubble of the looters.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"We'll be safe for the first time in centuries. Everybody will know his place and job.... Why should we permit them to blast the ground from under our feet every few steps? Why should we be kept on the go in eternal uncertainty?" (2.6.1.35)

THOUGHT:

James's panic and fear take on an unusually concrete form here

when he reveals that he is terrified of change and that the people who are better and stronger than him are a threat to his stability.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"There were screams coming from the cars. Passengers were breaking windows. Engineer Scott struggled frantically to make the engine start, but collapsed at the throttle, overcome by the fumes. Fireman Beal leaped from the engine and ran." (2.8.1.122)

THOUGHT:

The final moments of the Taggart Tunnel disaster are some of the most terrifying in the whole book, especially since the entire disaster was the result of incompetence and corruption.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She realized how often she had glanced back at that headlight. So long as it remained in sight, she had felt as if a life-line were holding them anchored safely; now they had to break it and dive into...and dive off this planet, she thought. (2.102.35)

THOUGHT:

The headlight here symbolizes civilization and the present, while the darkness Dagny walks into represents not just the past but a sort of "alien" world of horror.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

[A]n impersonal, unthinking, unembodied machine, of which none was the driver and all were the pawns, each to the degree of his evil. Dr. Stadler gripped the edge of the bench; he felt a desire to leap to his feet and run....He moved the field glasses from his eyes. He was looking at an empty prairie. There was no farm; there was nothing in the distance except a darkish strip that looked like the shadow of a cloud. (3.3.3.64-9)

THOUGHT:

Project X is terrifying, representing the brute power and fear that the government in Washington wield over people.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

No exit - her shreds of awareness were saying, beating it into the pavements in the sound of her steps - no exit...no refuge...no signals...no way to tell destruction from safety, or enemy from friend. (3.4.4.76)

THOUGHT:

Cherryl's final moments before her suicide are filled with a panicky sense of suffocation and hopelessness. It's interesting that she says the world is turning to "goo" just before this scene; here she seems to be sinking and drowning in something like quicksand.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

And then it was James Taggart who screamed. It was a long,

sudden, piercing scream, as if at some sudden sight, though his eyes were staring at space and seemed blankly sightless. The sight he was confronting was within him. (3.9.3.77)

THOUGHT:

James's final, horrific epiphany destroys him. Contrast James's realization about himself with someone like Hank, who isn't afraid to face up to the truth.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

[I]t was Eddie's face that froze into a look of terror at the sight of a ghost more frightening than any they could have expected: it was a train of covered wagons. (3.10.2.43)

THOUGHT:

Historical backsliding and decline are often used to convey fear in the book and to represent the country's downfall. Eddie's final scenes are filled with dread, since he realizes that modern civilization as he knew it is over.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Memory and the Past

Theme Summary

The past doesn't exactly haunt people in *Atlas Shrugged*; it's probably more accurate to say that it comes back to bite them in the butt. Characters are always regretting past actions or eating their words. Dagny, for instance, has a bit of an awkward moment when she finds out that the man she swore to kill is actually her true love and soul mate.

But a character's personal history is also a source of strength, pride, and character foundation. Dagny and Hank's pasts in particular largely define who they are in the present. Their pasts helped form the values they currently live by.

The past and memory also are connected to broader ideas in this book. Historical decline and the idea of time moving backward is a running theme throughout the novel. The past is in some ways seen as barbaric and retrograde here (people are literally riding in covered wagons at the end). But it isn't all urban decay and a lack of electricity and the Oregon Trail. The past is also a key part of Galt's values and the idea of Atlantis. Through Atlantis, Galt wants to resurrect the idea of a lost golden age, as represented by figures like Nat Taggart and childhood values like confidence, optimism, joy, and self-centeredness.

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of starting the book off with a scary childhood memory, namely Edie's memory of the tree being struck by lightning?
2. James is often described as old and haggard, Dagny as youthful and childlike. Why?

3. For some characters, we get extremely detailed back stories, but for others we get almost no information. What is the role of this technique?
4. People often refer to characters like Hugh Akston and Dagny as belonging to a previous age. What do they mean by this, and how do these observations connect to the book's themes?

Sample Thesis Statements

Over the course of the novel, Dagny and Hank both learn to accept and value their pasts rather than ignore them, demonstrating the importance of personal history.

Galt argues that his fight is centuries old, but it is actually more a product of the industrial age.

Quotes & Thoughts on Memory and the Past

QUOTE:

He wanted no sadness attached to his childhood; he loved its memories; any day of it he remembered now seemed flooded by a still, brilliant sunlight. It seemed to him as if a few rays reached into his present; not rays, more like pinpoint spotlights that gave an occasional moment's glitter to his job, to his lonely apartment, to the quiet, scrupulous progression of his existence. (1.1.1.26)

THOUGHT:

Eddie loves his childhood memories, but it's important to note that his happy childhood is largely separate from his adult life, existing as nothing more than "pinpoints" of light. Eddie seems

to have lost his happiness and can only access it in his memories.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

After a while, he realized that he was thinking of his past, as if certain days of it were spread before him, demanding to be seen again. He did not want to look at them; he despised memories as a pointless indulgence. But then he understood that he thought of them tonight in honor of that piece of metal in his pocket. Then he permitted himself to look. (1.2.1.23)

THOUGHT:

It's interesting that Hank refuses to look at his past usually while Eddie cherishes his. The reason for Hank's refusal might have something to do with his guilt and his internal struggle over value systems. Hank would rather not recall struggling and being unhappy perhaps.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She fought. She recovered. Years helped her to reach the day when she could face her memories indifferently, then the day when she felt no necessity to face them. It was finished and of no concern to her any longer. (1.5.2.290)

THOUGHT:

Dagny battles with her past head-on until it no longer controls her or causes her pain. Though Dagny eventually puts the past aside, she doesn't just ignore it from the start.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Francisco...if he could live through that night what right have I to complain? What does it matter, how I feel just now? He built that bridge. I have to hold it for him. I can't let it go.... I feel almost as if he'd know it, if I let that happen, he'd know it that night when he was alone over the river. (2.5.1.203)

THOUGHT:

Dagny draws on the memory of her heroic ancestor, Nat Taggart, to psych herself up for a fight. She feels like her failure would somehow reach back in time and impact Nat, as if the present could alter the past.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Now, looking from the memory of the girl on the flatcar to the Gift Certificate lying on his desk, he felt as if the two met in a single shock, fusing all the days and doubts he had lived between them, and by the glare of that explosion, in a moment's vision of a final sum, he saw the answer to all his questions. (2.6.3.96)

THOUGHT:

After his epiphany, Hank's past and present fuse together. He suddenly understands his past and everything that has led him to this moment, when he gains a fuller understanding of himself.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

When she opened her eyes, she saw sunlight, green leaves and a man's face. She thought: I know what this is. This was the world as she had expected to see it at sixteen - and now she had reached it - and it seemed so simple, so unastonishing, that the thing she felt was like a blessing pronounced upon the universe by means of three words: But of course. (3.1.1.1)

THOUGHT:

Atlantis is all about recapturing the joy of childhood, so it's fitting that it matches the vision of the world Dagny had as a teenager. It's interesting that she says "but of course" here, implying that the visions of her sixteen-year-old self were destined to be true.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"We're going to have security - for the first time in centuries - for the first time since the beginning of the industrial revolution!"

"Well, this, I guess," said Fred Kinnan, "is the anti-industrial revolution." (2.6.1.35-6)

THOUGHT:

Kinnan's snotty comment connects to the theme of historical backslide that often crops up in regard to the looters and their fear-inspired policies.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"If you weren't, you'd know that it's not this valley, but the view of life held by men in the outer world that is a prehistorical mirage." (3.2.1.34)

THOUGHT:

Ragnar again demonstrates the "opposite day" of the looters and their worldview by telling Dagny that the seemingly magical and "prehistoric" Atlantis should be present reality.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

He rose, he drew her to her feet - and when his arms closed about her, their kiss was the summation of their past, its end and their seal of acceptance. (3.2.2.76)

THOUGHT:

By reconciling, Francisco and Dagny are able to both recapture their past and conclude that phase of their relationship.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Then, still holding the recaptured sensation of what she had felt for him in the past, she grasped a quality that had always been part of it, now suddenly clear to her for the first time:...what she had felt for Francisco had always been a celebration of her future.... (3.2.3.78)

THOUGHT:

Dagny links up her past, present, and future here by recalling

how her past with Francisco was a celebration of their childhood dreams for the future, which they've now achieved. It seems that for a person to be truly whole, her past, present, and future need to be connected. Hank discovers this when he signs the Gift Certificate.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

". . . this is how I've watched you for ten years...from the ground under your feet...ten years of nights spent waiting to catch a glimpse of you here, on the platform, when you boarded a train . . ." (3.5.3.103)

THOUGHT:

After starting a relationship with Dagny, John seems almost compelled to run through their history as a way of getting it out of his system and letting them start in the present. His speaking style here is very unusual for him, too, breathless and full of stops and starts and incomplete sentences.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She knew what Nat Taggart had felt at his start and why now, for the first time, she was following him in full loyalty; the confident sense of facing a void and of knowing that one has a continent to build.

She felt the whole struggle of her past rising before her and dropping away, leaving her here, on the height of this moment. (3.10.1.34-35)

THOUGHT:

Once again, the theme of the present erasing the pain of the past emerges. It's interesting that Dagny is able to let go of her past pain by identifying with a figure of the past, Nat Taggart.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Visions of America

Theme Summary

There are a lot of different Americas in *Atlas Shrugged*. There's a familiar one, with cities, states, and industries that we recognize. And there is alternate-universe one existing in a world of communist People's States. We have an apocalyptic one that's in the process of sliding toward destruction. And we have the heroic vision of an ideal America, safeguarded in Colorado.

Atlas Shrugged is both a cautionary tale - a frightening vision of what America could be - and a book about what America *can* and, in Rand's opinion, *should* be. By tying Galt's values to Colorado, we get an ideal of America that is connected to the Old West and the ideas of a frontier spirit.

Most of the characters involved in Galt's strike bring different American ideals and visions of America to the table. Through Dagny, we get the Nat Taggart mythology and links to a frontier, pioneer spirit and the spirit of American industry. Through Francisco we get an immigrant success story and his love and loyalty to his chosen country. Through Galt we get the story of a self-made man who came from obscurity and made it. Through Hank we get references to the Puritans, which tie in to a hard-work ethic and industry. Different aspects of American mythology and ideals of greatness, from the puritans, to the founding fathers, to the pioneers, to industrial capitalists are all incorporated into Galt's value system.

Study Questions

1. Galt's quest to save America is led by two foreigners, Ragnar and Francisco. What is the significance of this?
2. How does Francisco see America? What makes America

great in his opinion?
3. How is the America of the book different from the one we know? How is it familiar?
4. What role does Colorado play in the book? What does Colorado represent in terms of the book's themes and ideas?

Sample Thesis Statements

In Atlantis, Galt and his fellow strikers hope to resurrect a certain vision of America's past, best represented by people like Nat Taggart.

Galt and his strikers hope to completely reinvent America, as demonstrated by Judge Narragansett rewriting the U.S. Constitution at the novel's end.

Quotes & Thoughts on Visions of America

QUOTE:

It began with a few lights. As a train of the Taggart line rolled toward Philadelphia, a few brilliant, scattered lights appeared in the darkness; they seemed purposeless in the empty plain, but too powerful to have no purpose. The passengers watched them idly without interest. [...] An office building appeared, close to the tracks. The big neon sign on its roof lighted the interiors of the coaches as they went by. It said: Rearden Steel. (1.2.1.1-7)

THOUGHT:

The light motif emerges again here in connection with Rearden Steel and industry in general. This passage also sets up a recurring theme: that of an oblivious society that doesn't

appreciate what it has.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

She walked on. She stopped at the window of a bookstore. The window displayed a pyramid of slabs in brownish-purple jackets, inscribed: *The Vulture if Molting*. "The novel of our century," said a placard. "The penetrating study of a businessman's greed. A fearless revelation of man's depravity." (1.4.1.30)

THOUGHT:

In this sequence Dagny encounters an entire series of signs of cultural decline. It's no mistake that in a looter-dominated culture, the bestselling book involves "vultures."

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

The car jerked forward. It moved slowly through a gap in a plank barrier, past the hole of a broken water main. She saw the new pipe stacked by the excavation; the pipe bore a trademark: Stockton Foundry, Colorado. She looked away; she wished she were not reminded of Colorado. (1.7.2.16)

THOUGHT:

The importance of Colorado is demonstrated through a series of images where Dagny sees how Colorado's industries are basically supporting New York. Scenes of urban decay are contrasted to shiny new equipment from Colorado.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

The sky had deepened to the greenish-blue of the rails, when they saw smokestacks in a distant valley. It was one of Colorado's new towns, the towns that had grown like a radiation from the Wyatt oil fields. She saw the angular lines of modern houses, flat roofs, great sheets of windows. ...a rocket shot out form among the buildings, rose high above the town and broke as a fountain of gold stars against the darkening sky. Men whom she could not see, were seeing the streak of the train on the side of a mountain and were sending a salute, a lonely plume of fire in the dusk, the symbol of celebration or of a call for help. (1.8.7.48)

THOUGHT:

The rocket acts as an important symbol here for Colorado's precarious position. Like the rocket, Colorado seems like a huge success, but it's on the verge of destruction.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Why didn't you move?"

"Where to?"

"Anywhere."

"What for?"

Dagny was staring at the two buckets; they were square tins with rope handles; they had been oil cans. (1.9.6.75-79)

THOUGHT:

The residents of Starnesville are apathetic and defeated. Like the oil cans - stripped of their true purpose- they seem to have gone backwards in time.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"To the glory of mankind, there was, for the first and only time in history, a country of money - and I have no higher, more reverent tribute to pay to America, for this means: a country of reason, justice, freedom, production, achievement....[T]here appeared the real maker of wealth, the greatest worker, the highest type of human being - the self-made man - the American industrialist." (2.2.4.39)

THOUGHT:

Francisco links up themes of money and America here in his "money speech." Money represents hard work and values to the Objectivists, so it's fitting for money to define America.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Nathaniel Taggart had been a penniless adventurer who had come from somewhere in New England and built a railroad across a continent, in the days of the first steel rails. His railroad still stood; his battle to build it had dissolved into a legend. (1.3.2.14)

THOUGHT:

Nat Taggart's story is a quintessentially American one: that of the self-made man whose hard work takes him from rags to riches.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"You know, Dagny, Thanksgiving was a holiday established by productive people to celebrate the success of their work." (2.2.4.199)

THOUGHT:

Again, people with Objectivist values (Hank here) claim America as their own, here by connecting Thanksgiving with a strong work ethic.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

The first story of the Minnesota disaster appeared in the newspapers three days later. It reported that the farmers who had waited in the streets of Lakewood for six days, with no place to store their wheat and no trains to carry it, had demolished the local courthouse, the mayor's home and the railroad station. Then the stories vanished abruptly and the newspapers kept silent, then began to print admonitions urging people not to believe unpatriotic rumors. (3.5.3.33)

THOUGHT:

We get a lot of rundowns of disasters throughout the country, which emphasizes the novel's epic scope. There are interesting details here about how the government is censoring the media and how people are starting to get violent in their protests.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"From its start, this country was a threat to the ancient rule of mystics. In the brilliant, rocket-explosion of its youth, this country displayed to an incredulous world what greatness was possible to man, what happiness was possible on earth. It was one or the other: America or mystics." (3.7.1.372)

THOUGHT:

Galt sets up another of his patented either-or dichotomies here by contrasting mysticism (faith, or a lack of logic) with the true spirit of America, setting up America as a champion of freedom and reason.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Do you know that the United States is the only country in history that has ever used its own monogram [the dollar sign] as a symbol of its depravity?... It was the only country in history...whose money was the symbol of man's right to his own mind, to his work, to his life, to his happiness, to himself." (2.10.2.179)

THOUGHT:

The fact that money has been turned into a negative symbol demonstrates how twisted and misguided the looters' values are. Owen Kellogg takes up Francisco's theme of realigning America with all of the positive values that money represents to the Objectivists.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

Theme and Quote Analysis on: Science

Theme Summary

Characters in *Atlas Shrugged* tend to toss around the term science without much careful regard to its meaning. Science means very different things here, depending on who is talking about it. The debates between Dr. Stadler and Dr. Ferris are representative of this difference. For Stadler, science is heroic, the product of deep thought and theory; for Ferris, science is a weapon and a means of control.

We definitely get a lot of examples of science gone horribly awry here, from the deadly Project X (which references the real Manhattan Project, which created the atomic bomb) to the fantastic Rearden Metal, which society misuses and ruins. In this novel, society, and especially politicians, often thwart scientific advances or use them for bad purposes.

Science is largely tied to technology and practical applications in this book, but it is also a certain way of thinking. Galt links science to reason in his value system. And when the world collapses, fancy technology becomes rather moot, and science must go back to its roots.

Study Questions

1. What is the symbolic significance of Project X, a device that uses sound waves as a weapon of mass destruction?
2. How does Stadler's death, and especially the way he dies, connect to the book's major themes?
3. By the end of the novel, the scientist/politician Dr. Ferris turns into a torturer. Is this evolution surprising, or could we see it coming?
4. Are science and technology two different things for John

Galt?

Sample Thesis Statements

The value system of Galt and his strikers favors science and technology over arts and the humanities.

Galt and his strikers favor people who make and do things, regardless of whether they are artists or scientists.

Quotes & Thoughts on Science

QUOTE:

She felt, at the same time, a growing respect for the adversary, for a science that was so clean, so strict, so luminously rational. Studying mathematics, she felt, quite simply and at once, "How great that men have done this." (1.3.2.4)

THOUGHT:

Dagny's love of math crops up often in the book; it represents her worldview, which favors reason over emotion. The language used to describe mathematics here is interesting: adversary, clean, strict, rational. These are terms that apply both to Dagny herself and to things she admires (like a good challenge).

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Let's find out" was the motive he gave to Dagny and Eddie for anything he undertook, or "Let's make it." These were his only

forms of enjoyment. (1.5.2.34)

THOUGHT:

Francisco is the embodiment of an engineer here, taking joy in discovering, making, and doing. Engineers are celebrated throughout the novel, and it's no accident that Dagny herself studied engineering.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

They spoke of the [Rearden] metal and of the possibilities which they could not exhaust. It was as if they were standing on a mountain top, seeing a limitless plain below and roads open in all directions. But they merely spoke of mathematical figures, of weights, of pressures, resistances, costs. (1.4.8.95)

THOUGHT:

Rearden Metal symbolizes the achievements of people who share Galt's values. It also serves as a sort of symbolic "victim" in the struggle with the looters, who continually try to steal and misuse it. Rearden Metal also adds to the book's alternate universe/science fiction-y feel. The "merely" is used somewhat ironically here, since, in this book's value system, things like science and math and money are considered very worthy topics of conversation.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"But you've given the prestige of science to that unspeakable stuff! .... But you've made them think it's science. *Science!* You've taken the achievements of the mind to destroy the mind."

(2.1.1.74)

THOUGHT:

Stadler's rant against Ferris has to do with protecting the "prestige" of science. It's almost as if Stadler views science as a religion and Ferris has committed blasphemy.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"A man with the genius of a great scientist, who chose to be a commercial inventor? I find it outrageous. He wanted a motor, and he quietly performed a major revolution in the science of energy, just as a means to an end, and he didn't bother to publish his findings, but went right on making his motor. Why did he waste his mind on practical appliances?"

"Perhaps because he liked living on this earth," she said involuntarily. (2.1.2.31)

THOUGHT:

Stadler reveals his own biases here when he fails to appreciate the value of technology. He only believes in pure science and fails to understand the need to use it for practical ends. Dagny's remark emphasizes how she links life to positive actions.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Hank, that motor was the most valuable thing inside this factory," she said, her voice low. "It was more valuable than the whole factory and everything it ever contained. Yet it was passed up and left in the refuse. It was the one thing nobody

found worth the trouble of taking." (1.9.6.161-162)

THOUGHT:

The motor plays an important role in symbolizing the strike and the strikers' values, and helps reveal the blindness and ignorance of society at large, who dismiss it as junk.

Go to CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Point Four. No new devices, inventions, products, or goods of any nature whatsoever, no now on the market, shall be produced, invented, manufactured or sold after the date of this directive." (2.6.1.61)

THOUGHT:

The disastrous Directive targets business and science as the "enemy." Science is all about discovery, and change, which is of course what looters like James find terrifying.

Go to CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"Our first rule here, Miss Taggart," he answered, "is that one must always see for oneself." (3.1.1.44)

THOUGHT:

Galt, and Akston later on, express a sort of Scientific Method view of life, emphasizing the need to gather evidence for oneself before making a judgments or forming hypotheses.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

The farmhouse tore into strips of clapboard and went down, followed by a geyser of the bricks of its chimney..... It was so swift, so uncontested, so simple, that Dr. Stadler felt no horror, he felt nothing, it was not the reality he had known, it was the realm of a child's nightmare where material objects could be dissolved by means of a single malevolent wish. (3.3.1.68)

THOUGHT:

Project X is like something out of a science fiction nightmare. Stadler seems to want to deny its connection with science, comparing its effects to an evil wish or a nightmare. He doesn't want to acknowledge the evil that science can be used to perpetrate.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

Dr. Stadler leaped to stop him - but Meigs shoved him aside with one arm, gave a gulp of laughter at the sight of Stadler falling to the floor, and with the other arm, yanked a lever of the Xylophone.

The crash of sound - the screeching crash of ripped metal and of pressures colliding on conflicting circuits, the sound of a monster turning upon itself - was heard only inside the structure. No sound was heard outside. (3.9.1.90-91)

THOUGHT:

The destruction of Project X is a very fitting symbolic end to the looters' regime, as is the fact that Meigs is the one to pull the lever. An ignorant thug, Meigs rose to power in a criminal regime and then brought down destruction on everyone by

abusing the "tools" of the looters' system.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

QUOTE:

"That's what you think!" said Ferris, and chuckled. "You haven't seen our experimental model in action. Last month, we got three confessions in three unsolved murder cases."

"If . . ." started Mr. Thompson, and his voice cracked suddenly into a moan, "if he dies, we all perish!"

"Don't worry," said Ferris. "He won't. The Ferris Persuader is safely calculated against that possibility." (3.9.2.26-28)

THOUGHT:

It's also fitting that the looters would use science and technology to develop machines for torture and exploitation.

Go to CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

Best of the Web

Websites

Run by the Ayn Rand Institute, this website has information on the book, its author, and its publishing history. It also has current news about the novel. *Atlas Shrugged* Website

The homepage of the Institute, which includes tons of information on Rand's life and her work, as well as current news and events. Ayn Rand Institute

Another Ayn Rand Institute website, this one focuses on all of Rand's novels and her philosophy. Current news and essay contests are also included here. Ayn Rand's Novels

A scholarly organization that studies Objectivism. This page has information on Rand's philosophy and her books, as well as scholarly and news articles. It also has detailed timelines of her major novels. The Atlas Society

In the News

A fun blog article by Chris Matthew Sciabarra on the links between *Atlas Shrugged* and the movie *The Incredibles*. Seriously. "Rand the Incredible" Article

A *Huffington Post* article by John Wellington Ennis about the novel's recent surge in popularity and how people tend to misunderstand it. "Missing the Point of Atlas Shrugged"

An *Economist* article that tracks recent sales of *Atlas Shrugged*. (Login required.) "Atlas Felt a Sense of Dejà Vu"

A fun article that tracks Rand's life in American pop culture. "Rand-O-Rama: Ayn Rand's Long Shelf Life in American Culture"

An article on Ayn Rand relevance today in *Newsweek*. "Atlas Hugged"

A quick preview: "'Atlas Shrugged' was published 52 years ago, but in the Obama era, Rand's angry message is more resonant than ever before." "Ayn Rand's Revenge"

Movie or TV Productions

An *Entertainment Weekly* blog post covering some recent developments in the long saga of trying to get the book made into a movie. Atlas Shrugged: The Movie?

Historical Documents

A short description of Objectivism written by Rand in 1962. Introducing Objectivism

A transcript of Rand's anti-communist testimony during the McCarthy hearings. Ayn Rand's Testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities, October 20, 1947

Video

Jennifer Burns, author of a recent book on Rand, appeared on *The Daily Show* and spoke about Rand. *The Daily Show*

A hilarious clip from the 1998 *South Park* episode "Plucked," where Barbrady shares his opinions on *Atlas Shrugged*. Officer Barbrady Hates *Atlas Shrugged*

This Simpson's episode features a lot of jokes about Ayn Rand, including a running gag where Maggie attends Ayn Rand's School for Tots. "A Streetcar Named Marge"

An interview Rand did in 1959 with CBS's Mike Wallace. Ayn Rand Interview with Mike Wallace

This clip is the first of five parts, of an interview that originally aired in 1979. Ayn Rand Interview with Phil Donahue

This is a video lecture by Dr. Onkar Ghate from 2007. *Atlas Shrugged*: America's Second Declaration of Independence

A video clip from a 1961 interview Ayn Rand did at the University of Michigan. "For the New Intellectual" Clip

Audio

This is an audio recording of a lecture delivered by Ayn Rand at the Ford Hall Forum in Boston in 1961. Is Atlas Shrugging?

Images

A slideshow of photos of Rand from the Ayn Rand Institute. Ayn Rand Slideshow

Painting done by Gustave Moreau in 1868. Prometheus

The famous bronze statue of Atlas in New York City's Rockefeller Center. Atlas in Rockefeller Center

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